# People & the Planet

IPPF, UNFPA, IUCN

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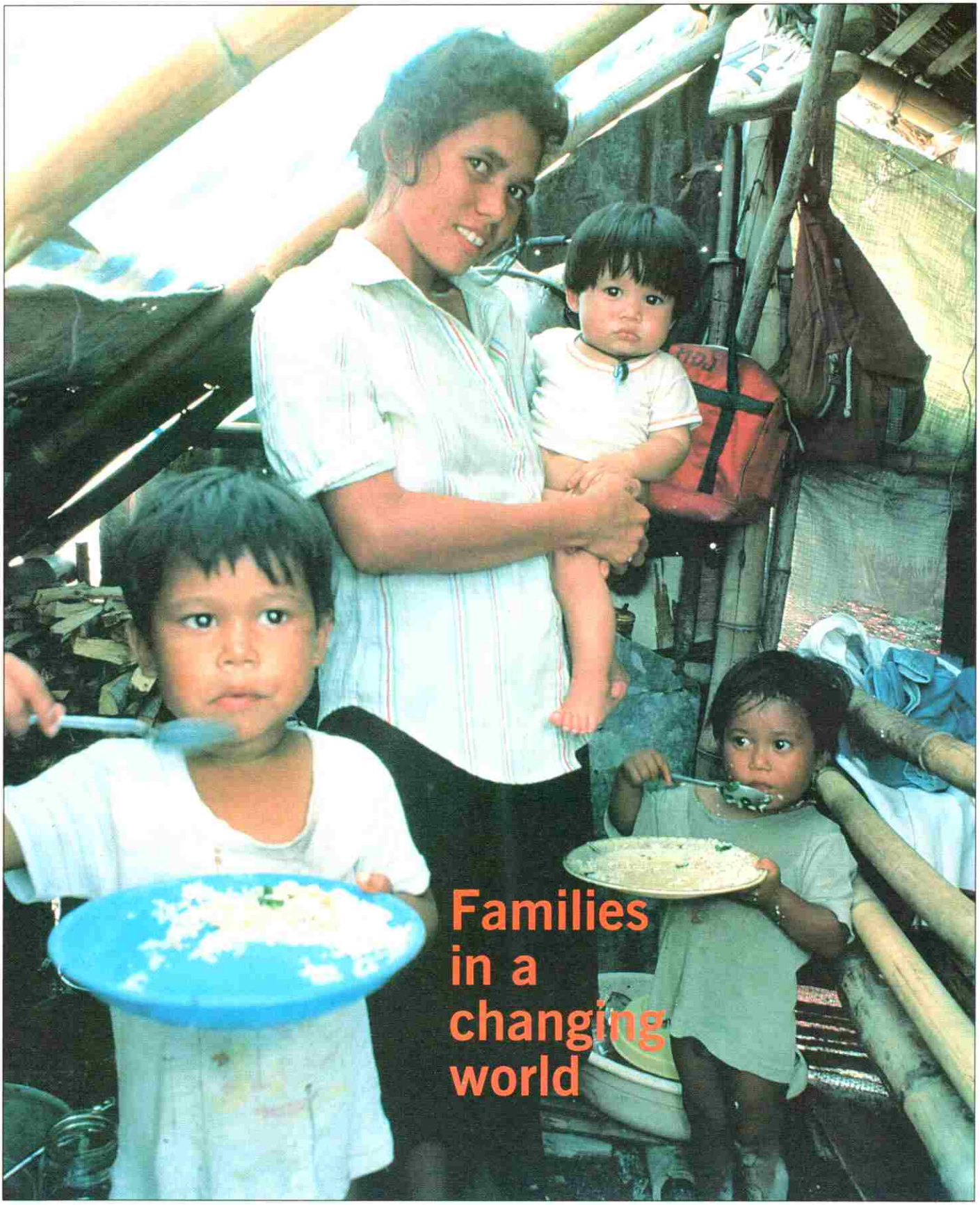

## Families in a changing world

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NIGEL DICKINSON/STILL PICTURES

**Left:** *Ashaninka couple with their first baby, Acre Province, Brazil.*
MIKE GOLDWATER/NETWORK

■ **Our next issue, for the Cairo Conference, reports first-hand on the price of success and failure in population programmes around the world.**


# People & the Planet

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# Family facts

It is a happy coincidence that the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in September, should fall within the Year of the Family. The latter has given a valuable impetus to fresh thinking about 'family' planning and broader population policies.

Cynthia Lloyd of the Population Council, has shown for example how small a proportion of their fertile years women in many sub-Saharan countries actually spend living with their first husband (38 per cent in Ghana). Yet family planning programmes are still largely premised on the idea of the married couple. She has also shown that increases in women's earnings do not necessarily improve their life options. Men may merely appropriate the earnings and add to the woman's burdens. In such cases decisions about family size may remain essentially with the man.

This issue of the magazine contains many other insights into the changing family: from the rapid increase in single mothers throughout the world, explored by Debbie Taylor, to the inequalities within families and the new pressures on the smaller family, explained by Jodi Jacobson, and the desperate and neglected plight of widows, explored by Margaret Owen. Perdita Huston, who has travelled through 10 countries talking to families, marvels at their resilience in the face of environmental and modernizing pressures. Bishakha Datta brings these vividly to life in her profile of a Bombay street family who, though poverty-stricken and invisible, provide an unexpected example of a loving, stable two-child family.

All of this reinforces the importance of addressing the broad gender issues when rethinking population and development policies. Just what such policies might include is set out in a closing article by Judith Bruce. As Cynthia Lloyd has said: "Women cannot bring about the demographic transition alone . . . the extent of women's autonomy and men's family responsibility will likely dictate the pace at which economic and social change as well as population policy are able to affect demographic behaviour."

*John Rowley*

## Partners for change

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# NEWS FILE

## A forest saved

The last dense forest in Guinea-Bissau is being saved, thanks to the efforts of three national NGOs. One of these, Tineguena (This land is ours) is headed by a dedicated young woman from this tiny African state.

Augusta Henriques, made her mark at the IUCN General Assembly in Buenos Aires earlier this year, not least by speaking up for the members from the South. But more remarkable is what she has achieved in three short years at home.

Guinea-Bissau is a coastal country, of only 36,000 km$^2$ squeezed between Senegal and Guinea-Conakry. A Portuguese colony until 1974, it was launched into independence with only one secondary school, one beer factory and no graduates. Its population today is around 1 million, and set to double by 2025 despite one of the highest death rates in the region.

Tiniguena was set up in 1991 and began field operations only 18 months ago. Today it has 10 field projects and a range of educational activities, including a special programme under which children stay with local communities who are involved in conservation work, and then report back to their schools and to the media.

But its main achievement has been to help start the process of saving the Cantanhez forest, working closely with local communities. The only remaining semi-temperate forest in the country, it covers an area of 650 km$^2$ and is home to over 4,000 forest dwellers, who were steadily burning it down to plant dryland rice.

One reason for this was the destruction of the previous water- grown rice areas during the war for independence, when salt water invaded the rice plots. Felling the forest provided only short- term fertility, so the farmers cut more trees until two-thirds of the forest was gone.

Working with two other NGOs and with technical advice from IUCN, Tiniguena sought alternatives to dry rice growing that would save the forest. Using indigenous techniques it helped the local farmers to remove salt from the water and encouraged wet rice farming, with small credits. It negotiated to help local people to protect the remaining forest by providing bicycles and other equipment for guards, and it developed other sources of income through fishing, agriculture and fruit farming.

Altogether some 40 per cent of the forest has now been earmarked for permanent preservation.

All this has required intensive work with the local people. As Augusta Henriques says: "If you want the participation of the community, you must base the activity in the local dynamic. The dialogue has to be pertinent to them, so that they can discover alternative local solutions."

For the future, migration from Guinea-Conakry is creating a new population pressure and local people are themselves asking for laws to protect the forest from activities such as cutting big trees for pirogue-building, and hunting.

■*Contact: Tiniguena, Esta Terra e Nossa, CP 667, Bissau, Guinea-Bissau. Tel/Fax: (245) 201786.*

*Dryland rice farming in Cantanhez forest.*

PETER HULM/IUCN

## 21st century goals

Women leaders from Non-Government Organizations in developing countries have called for an expanded partnership between governments and NGOs to reach the 120 million women who want contraception but are not using it, largely due to lack of availability. They also want help for the millions of sexually active adolescents who are without services.

The recommendation concludes a series of meetings by women leaders in Africa, Asia and Latin America, held by the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) in Africa, Asia and Latin America in preparation for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) due to take place in Cairo in September. The women leaders, who met in Bangladesh, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru and Uganda, want a broadened approach to population policy for the 21st Century, that will emphasize "women's access, choice and participation" in all aspects of society.

They recommend immediate action to begin to eliminate discrimination against girl children, and to close the gender gap to education. And they want increased financial and technical help for adolescent reproductive health.

In calling for an integrated approach to population and development, they believe the focus of population policy should be on raising women's status to enable countries to meet sustainable development goals:

"Without significant improvements in the coming decade in women's reproductive health care and economic and educational opportunities as well as full legal rights, rapid population growth will continue and the quality of life in all countries may be irreparably damaged."

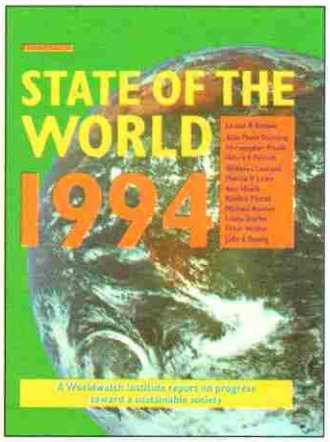
Nearly 200 women leaders in family planning and development organizations took part in the meetings. CEDPA is a Washington-based international organization committed to empowering women and girls to be full partners in development.

■*Contact: CEDPA, 1717 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 200, Washington DC 20036 USA. Tel: 202 667 1142, Fax: 202 332 4496.*

IUCN

## People and resources

In a new assessment of how people are beginning to outrun resources, the latest *State of the World 1994* report from the Worldwatch Institute, looks at the projected growth of five basic resources in the present and next decade and finds that all are declining in relation to population growth.




The five are fish, irrigated land, cropland, rangeland and pasture, and forests. Each of these, with the exception of forests is forecast to increase in yield or area, but none as fast as population which is set to increase from 5,290 million to 7,030 million between 1990 and 2010 - a jump of 33 per cent.

According to the report, opportunities to expand these basic resources are severely limited. Indeed, a good share of the resources we have already appropriated, and depend on, are losing productivity. Nor are there any identifiable substitutes for these essential biological and water resources.

Cropland expanded by only 2 per cent in the decade from 1980 to 1990 and the report argues that it is unlikely to grow faster than 5 per cent in the period to 2010, leaving a decline of 21 per cent in cropland per capita.

Overgrazing has already damaged some 680 million hectares of grazing and pasture land since the mid-century, and is unlikely to increase by more than 4 per cent - or a drop of 22 per cent in per capita terms.

The world's fish catch peaked at around 100 million tons in 1989, while the marine catch is actually falling and 26 of the world's major fisheries are either at or exceeding their natural limits, or in serious decline. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) better management might allow a 20 per cent increase in total catch, still a 10 per cent drop per capita.

As for irrigated land, which provides a third of the global harvest, the per capita supply has dropped by 6 per cent since 1978. Around 2 million hectares are being lost to salinization every year. Worldwatch says the most optimistic estimate is an increase of 277 million hectares, or 17 per cent over 1990. This would be a 12 per cent loss in per capita terms.

Finally, as forest cover continues to shrink by 3.7 per cent every decade, the per capita forest area will drop by an astonishing 30 per cent by 2010.

■State of the World 1994, *W W Norton, New York and Earthscan, London. $11.95/£9.95.*

## US population funding up

For the second year in a row, the United States Congress has significantly increased total funding for population programmes. More than $500 million will be available for 1994, compared with $430 million last year.

Changes are underway, however, in the way these funds are applied, with a more integrated approach to population and health while still assigning a central role to family planning. The new strategy highlights efforts to reduce maternal and child mortality, decrease HIV infections and increase educational opportunities and health care for girls and women. Fewer countries may receive bilateral assistance in the future, with emphasis on those where population and health conditions are impeding sustainable development.

The new direction for US population policy, in sharp contrast to the Reagan and Bush Administrations' approach, assigns priority to slowing population growth because it promotes so many goals at once – reducing political instability, hunger, migration and strains on the environment. United States funding for population programmes could rise to $1.2 billion by the year 2000. Both IPPF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), abruptly cut out of the aid programme in 1985, stand to benefit.

## Time capsule

In an effort to stimulate action to slow rapid population growth, and reduce the forces of overconsumption, pollution and resource depletion, time capsules are being buried this summer in Britain.

Linked to World Environment Day (June 5) and the Year of the Family, 1994, the project will consist of the ceremonial burial of time capsules containing letters addressed to future generations, apologizing for our failure to take effective action in caring for our environment. More importantly, these letters will be seen as a pledge to act now, in changing our lifestyles and creating a sustainable world.

"The idea was triggered by my fear of the judgement of our grandchildren, from whom (it has been well said) we have 'borrowed' the Earth", says John Guillebaud, Professor of Family Planning and Reproductive Health, London, who developed the idea. He hopes it will be taken up in other countries.

The burial event, to take place in Britain at both Kew Gardens in London and the University of Liverpool's Botanic Gardens will be attended by parents and children from all over the country. Children under the age of 12 months, will be given Certificates of Attendance, redeemable at the opening of the Capsule in 2044. The ultimate aim of the project is that finders of the time capsule will wonder why an apology had been necessary.

■*Contact: Professor John Guillebaud, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR, Tel: +44 71 823 8842, Fax: +44 71 823 8791.*

## Quote

"Few people have realized that conservation is not a technical but a social problem. World societies are losing their ethical and cultural roots, replacing them fast with consumptive ambitions and, ultimately, life-styles. Conservation must therefore become, and be seen, as a people affair." *Dr Claude Martin, Director General of WWF International, addressing the IUCN General Assembly in January.*

## Correction

In our last issue, on coasts, the key to the chart showing future population growth in the North and South of the Mediterranean was transposed. It should have shown population projected to grow much faster in the South than in the North.

*John Guillebaud prepares a time capsule with actress Susan Hampshire and environmentalist David Bellamy.*

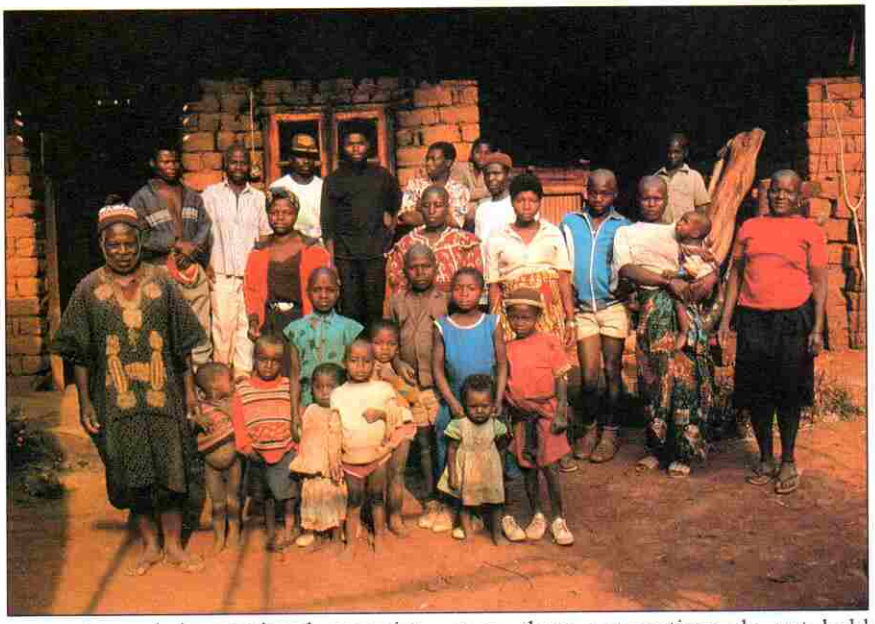
**Families in the real world are often not what the policy makers think. And 'the family' everywhere is under immense stress from rapid economic, social and environmental changes. In this Year of the Family *Jodi Jacobson* introduces our special report on**

# The family: myth and reality

The family. In every culture and every country, across time and space, the family is and has been the core unit of society. It is the transmitter from one generation to another of the traditions and practices that bind societies together. It is, usually, the main source for individuals of physical and spiritual sustenance. And it is, always, a social icon of people's needs for economic security, emotional stability, permanence, and national identity.

Real differences in the composition of families notwithstanding, the notion of what "the family" is—and what it should be—is perhaps the most potent and widely shared ideology in the world today. It is from the realm of political imagination that the pervasive notion of "traditional families" – nuclear families containing fathers, mothers, and their children – comes. In turn, this notion shapes the social and economic policy of which such families are the central focus.

But, as a growing body of data show, families often are not what we perceive, or want, them to be. The family as an institution is under stress, buffeted by the rapid economic, social, and environmental changes under way throughout the world. Persistent poverty, inequitable access to productive resources, misguided development policies, and the failure of conventional economic strategies to address basic needs all have undermined family welfare. These conditions cause – and are further exacerbated by – rapid changes in the size and distribution of local and regional populations. Governments and international agencies have been slow to recognize the fundamental changes in families, or to address their root causes. As a result, a large and growing share of today's families are left without the resources necessary to fulfil their various roles in caring for and nurturing their members.



MARK EDWARDS/STILL PICTURES

## Basic needs

Implicit in the theory and practice of conventional economic and social strategies, for example, is the assumption that individuals within a given family share common interests and work toward common goals. A second assumption is that, in times of hardship, parents will sacrifice for their children, and individual children will share equally the benefits and burdens of wealth and poverty. Increasingly, however, these assumptions do not hold true for a large and growing share of households worldwide.

In low-income countries, for example, the impact of the global recession on the access of poorer families to social resources has been dramatic. A decline in per-capita income, caused by global recession, together with balance-of-payments problems, deteriorating terms of trade and heavy debt burdens, left a growing number of households unable to meet their basic needs. In the 1980s, for example, per capita incomes in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America fell by one-fourth and one-sixth respectively.

Meanwhile, fiscal crises have forced drastic reductions in vital services. Structural adjustment programmes required massive cuts in already tight

MARK EDWARDS/STILL PICTURES

**Far left:** *A polygamous family in Cameroon including six wives and some of their 35 children.*
**Left:** *Yanomani family in Brazil.*
**Below:** *Migrant family on the outskirts of Nairobi.*

health budgets. Real per-capita spending on health care fell in three-fourths of the nations of Africa and Latin America between 1980 and 1990.

The realities of how families are faring in a global climate of uncertainty and scarcity are little known and even less well understood. What is increasingly clear, however, is that the families most vulnerable to these changes are those, such as female-headed households, that do not fit the ideal. Non-traditional families are the only haven and source of support for millions of children and elderly dependents worldwide. Yet it is these same households that routinely receive the fewest resources and garner the least political attention.

## Global trends

How is the family changing? Although the nature and extent of changes varies from country to country, there are several trends that appear to be consistent across borders.

For one, families are getting smaller. Today, couples are marrying later, and waiting longer to have their first child than two decades ago. At the same time, completed family size has declined markedly in many countries.

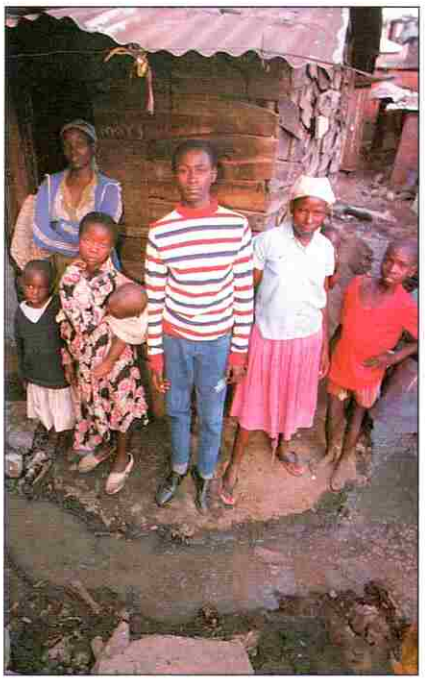
Apart from the impact of fewer children, the decline in the number of people living under one roof also is the product of increased migration from rural to urban areas, or from one country to another. Many migrants leave their homes out of economic necessity, and, at least in the beginning, send home a chunk of their earnings for use by the families they left behind. An estimated $70 billion dollars a year is remitted from migrants in one place to spouses and dependents in another. But the vulnerability of nuclear families to eventual abandonment by economic migrants increases with their distance and the duration of their absence.

These trends are consistent in both the North and the South. From the 1970s to the 1980s, data show that the share of households with more than five children fell in many countries of the South. The share of women ages 40 to 44 years with five or more children declined by 10 per cent in Egypt, 20 per cent in Ghana, and 46 per cent in Thailand, during this period for example. Household size has long been much smaller in the industrial economies; in recent years it has declined further.

Today, from one-fifth to one-third of all households in countries such as the Czechoslovakia, Japan, Sweden, and the United States are made up of just one person. Often these are elderly persons with few or no living relatives to assist in their care.

Reducing family size has in fact been a major focus of policies aimed at stabilizing global population size at the lowest feasible level. Demographic and economic policies assume that with fewer members, families will be able to invest more toward improving the quality of life of each individual. They also assume that, in the shift from subsistence to cash economies, and from low-skilled to high-skilled jobs, families will favour educating their children over employing them as part of the household labour force.

As long as they have access to resources, large nuclear and extended families can balance the need to feed, clothe, and house a greater number of people against the ability to put more of them to work.



TRYGVE BOLSTAD/PANOS PICTURES

Modernization, resource scarcity, and the spread of a cash economy, by contrast, dramatically raises the costs of education, food, housing, and other necessities. Couples, the theory goes, will cope with these higher costs by having fewer children, but investing more in each.

## Support system

Ironically, however, as families have decreased in size, so too have social support systems providing health, edu-

**Left:** *Women from Ifugao Province, Northern Philippines. Longer lifespans are creating more dependent old people.*
**Below:** *Three generations of women from one family in Nepal.*

JEREMY HARTLEY/PANOS PICTURES

cation, training, and access to employment. Shifts in the costs of these services from governments to families have in fact increased the burden of raising each child. Concurrent trends, however, have simultaneously reduced the number of breadwinners per family and undercut their earning power. Today, as a result, pressures on the one or two main income earners to care for others within a household are greatly intensified. At the same time, longer lifespans mean that, with fewer resources, each family must support a larger number of elderly dependents.

The assumption that individuals within poor families will pull together with common interests and goals is not always supported by the data. It may seem reasonable to assume that each dollar of income earned by a poor man in Bangladesh, Bolivia, or Botswana would go toward improving the welfare of his wife and children. Indeed, assuming that men as heads of households are the family's main breadwinners, development programmes have been built on the premise that what is good for men is good for the family. But in many areas this is patently not the case because women effectively provide the largest share of the family's basic needs, and the incomes of men are siphoned off by the purchase of alcohol, tobacco, and other items for personal consumption.

Yet another assumption – that within poor households resources will be distributed equally regardless of gender – may be unquestioned. However, in much of the world, men and boys enjoy far higher status in families than do women and girls. As a result, they receive a larger share of family resources. In India, for example, studies show that in many states male children consistently received more and better food and health care than their sisters. Consequently, far more girls than boys die in the critical period between infancy and age five. And with the exception of girls aged 10 to 14, Indian females die from preventable causes at far higher rates than males right up to their mid-thirties.

Evidence of similar patterns of discrimination in the allocation of household resources has been found in Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

Increasing awareness of gender-based discrimination within families has revealed another myth of family policy. New insights gleaned from the Demographic and Health Surveys in several countries reveal that, instead of having fewer children and investing more in them, couples may maintain relatively large family size, but invest more in some children than in others. Invariably, this discrimination arising from scarcity is inflicted on girls, not boys.

## Single parents

Increased migration of men, along with abandonment, divorce, widowhood, and changing marriage patterns, together have led to what is perhaps the most pervasive and the most troublesome of all changes in family structure – the rapid rise in female-headed households. In every country, single-parent households headed by women are swelling the ranks of the poor (see article by Debbie Taylor, page 13). But "even where there is a male earner," notes World Bank consultant Lynn Bennett, "women's earnings form a major part of the income of poor households." At least one-fourth of dual earner households rely on female earnings for more than 50 per cent of total income.

Spousal separation resulting from migration often leads to a lessening of the emotional and financial ties of men to their wives and children. The propensity of male migrants to create second families outside of marriage, or of both migrants and non- migrants in some regions to practice polygamy, not only is changing the nature of marital relations between men and women, but is forcing an increasing number of children to compete with step-brothers and sisters for their father's time and resources.

These changes in the family have profound implications for the well-being of individuals and society. Conventional measures of economic development tell us little about equity within families, nor the increasing burden on women relative to men of maintaining family welfare. Clearly, the focus of economic and social policy needs to shift toward a recognition of, and support for, the diversity of family arrangements throughout the world. ■

*Jodi Jacobson is Director of the Washington-based Health Development Policy Project, which aims to advance women's health concerns and social justice in foreign policy and international development.*

SALLY AND RICHARD GREENHILL

# Families speak of Family

**Author and activist** *Perdita Huston* **has visited 10 countries during the past year to research a book on the changing family. Here she describes her impressions, introduces some of the families she met, and outlines the 'family-friendly' policies which she believes are now needed.**

Throughout the human experience the structure of family has continued its evolution, shaped and reshaped by the demands of changing social and natural environments. From the hunter and gatherer societies of our origins to the single sex parents of today, the transformation of family forms is a constant. What is different in today's world is the rapidity of this transformation, the *pace of change* which alters global society.

Everywhere, family structures and living arrangements are undergoing rapid change; family size is smaller than a generation ago; elders are living longer and remaining more active; the young are better educated, more mobile and better informed. At the same time, changing economic structures require that families seek new earning opportunities, wherever that may be, that women take a more active role in society and the economy, that education costs be met to assure a livelihood for one's children.

Conversations with families in 10 nations during the past year reveal a remarkable resilience and adaptive capacity in swiftly evolving circumstances. In both industrialized and less industrialized societies, families express a sincere determination to protect and conserve their family unit despite the push and pull of modernization. The conversations also reveal consensus on major trends affecting family structure and well-being: migration – to urban areas or foreign lands, a more fragile environment from which to extract a livelihood, a rising conflict between the demands of work and the home, the changing roles of men and women, the media's influence and the complexity of urban life. These trends are described by all social classes and in nearly every setting.

Elders speak of their pleasure at the improved quality of life from their youth. In Japan it was a question of the variety of foods which, two generations ago, had been scarce and dull; in Mali, roads and tools were the positive improvements voiced. Yet most elders with whom I spoke expressed a sense of vulnerability, a feeling that the younger generation might move on, leave them behind, depriving them of the living arrangements and respect to which they are accustomed. Housing is a special concern of the elderly because new dwellings, especially in urban areas, are too small to accommodate multi-generational living which assures their support and care.

In Thailand, when talking with a middle-class businessman, I listened to him express frustration at having to leave the family home where he lives with his parents."We live with my parents but we've decided we must move. It is because of Bangkok's traffic.

"I am searching for a house or an apartment close to the university; my wife works there and, one day, my son will study there. I'm sure living in a high-rise building will be different for us but I don't mind. Our lives will be simpler. As it is now, I drop my son at the kindergarten around 8 and then drive my wife to the university. If we get to school by 7.30, she'll be work by 8.15, 8.30 about one hour. But if I drop him at 8 she won't get to work until 9; then it takes me another 40 minutes to get to my office. Truly, it will be simpler for us, but my parents will be sad to see us go."

In rural areas it is not the man-made environment which causes changes in living arrangements and relationships; it is often Nature itself, which, when under stress, may force those who depend on it to adopt new ways.

PERDITA HUSTON

**Left:** *An elderly Malian farmer talks of changes in his village.*
**Right:** *Abdul Raouf with his two wives.*

Outside of Mopti, in the Sahelian nation of Mali, a 96-year-old farmer told of changes he had seen.

"We've been farmers here for generations. This is a good village, on a good site. But we're beginning to have water problems. In years past there was so much water that I had to crush three eggs, one at each end of the village, one in the centre, to protect us from floods which ravaged the village. The river runs nearby; in those days it overflowed from too much water. That was a long time ago, I think the last time was 1963. Since then the rains have diminished little by little.

"Now, when the rainy season is due to commence, we are obliged to plead with God to have rain. I pray to a *marabout*, a saintly man, each year. That was never necessary before.

"I had 12 children with one wife and three with a second. Of the first 12 only four are still living; seven died as infants, one at five years. With the second wife, just one child remains; two died young and so did the wife. These days there are fewer deaths among children because we give vaccinations at the health centre. The village is growing in numbers fast.

"The only problems are those between the farmers and the herders. There are good pasture lands around here but there is no longer enough land for everyone. We have over 100 families and are beginning to have problems. The young are leaving us and few come back to settle."

Abdul Raouf is a villager of central Bangladesh. His story is not an uncommon one for those who seek work yet find none in their own land. The search for work results in the migration of millions of individuals each year. They toil far from home, far from family support groups and far from their traditions.

"It was 1965. The river broke its banks, changed course and our land was covered with water, lost. My father was still alive then. I am his only son; I have four sisters. Those were very difficult years. We managed to eat because my father and I worked on other's farms. After the river took our home a second time my father died and I came to Sheriakandi with my sisters.

"I bought this parcel of land which is no good for farming, just for a house. A friend of mine in Dhaka told me about Saudi Arabia. He took money from me but he was trying to cheat me. Instead of Saudi Arabia, he sent me to Singapore. It was fine. We were well treated; we even had a TV in our quarters. I stayed for two years, until my sister died. Then I had to come back. Singapore is on my mind all the time. I feel like going there. I'm willing but it is not possible; I don't have the money."

Abdul Raouf's view of the world, of his possibilities, had changed during his time abroad. He had enjoyed his migrant labourer experience; his wife, on the other hand, told what it was like to be on her own and summed up the result of their sacrifice:

"We'd been married for eight years when my husband left for Singapore. I was 24 and had one daughter. Since his return seven years ago I have had three more children.

"When he left I had to care for his four sisters. I was like their mother. I brought them up. I had to make do with only 500 takas which he sent each month. Just think, we had to eat, repay debts with 500 takas. I repaid his travel loan, and then had to borrow money for rice, clothing, soap and school fees.

"When he returned he brought money and some goods which he sold. With that, he cleared his debts. Now he ▶

## Egyptian village patriarch

**Abdel Mohamed Hussein rested serenely in the sitting room of his village home in the Egyptian delta. Born 67 years ago, the fourth of five sons of a farmer and his wife, he was married at age 15 to a 12-year-old girl of his mother's choosing. He, in turn, was blessed with five sons.**

**Abdel Mohamed is, in fact, blessed in many ways. Knowing that the family land would be divided into five portions and that a single plot would be too small to support a family, he apprenticed to a tailor when a teenager. The land he inherited provided the family's food; he was an accomplished tailor; the family prospered as the village tripled in size.**

**Sayeed, his eldest, attended university for a couple of years and is a government employee. The second son studied for a while, joined the army and became an officer. The third son completed teacher training school and works nearby; the fourth found no work after completing university and was obliged to accept a teaching position in Kuwait. The last son, Gamel, now 30, has been working in France for three years.**

**The first and last sons have chosen their wives; the others were chosen by Farida, Abdel Mohamed's wife. All the women of the family wear the *hijab*, a head covering; only one works outside the home, a schoolteacher. The grandfather shakes his head at such nonsense. His was a world where a girl was married before she reached 15 and remained at home the rest of her life.**

**But Abdel Mohamed is content knowing that he has succeeded in keeping his family together in the traditional way, regardless of their occupations or dreams. The five sons, their wives and children all live in one home, *his*.**

**The small parcel of land he inherited brought a fine price in a land-poor village; with the earnings he built an apartment for each son, one on top of the other, on the roof of his home. As he walked from floor to floor, introducing me to each relative, he beamed with pride. "Now my old age will not be lonely like all those people in the cities".** ■

# Male attitudes, women's choice

**High in the Bani Hamida mountains of Jordan, Suleiman, an elderly farmer manages to eke out a living on the arid hillsides overlooking the Dead Sea. His young olive trees, already bent by the wind, and the rock-strewn soil were visible reminders of the difficulties of productive farming in the region. Indeed, his son had given up trying and become a seasonal day-labourer.**

**His daughter-in-law, Jazia, was, at age 38, the mother of nine children. She told of her marriage at 17 and of the difficulties of life in the hills where her husband finds only occasional work. Two of her daughters are already married. With immense sadness, she told about how the fifteen-year-old had been *swapped* for the daughter of a 45-year-old blind man so that Jazia's husband, and the blind man, could have young wives. For a year now Jazia's co-wife has shared the three-room house with her and has since borne a child of her own. Her presence is a constant reminder that Jazia was unable to protect her daughter from early and forced marriage.**

**Jazia's youngest child, barely a month old, lay in a covered wooden box in the corner. She pointed to it, saying:**

**"I don't want any more children, I didn't want all these I have had. We are too poor. I would like to get an operation to prevent it but my husband says I have to keep having children.**

**"I've never even been to a doctor."**

**Women's access to reproductive health care and family planning is a human rights issue, a family health issue and, admittedly, a primary factor in successful population policies. Until male attitudes to what constitutes *manhood*, or responsible *fatherhood*, change, many women will not have the opportunity to plan their *motherhood*.** ■

has no salary at all. Sometimes he finds work, sometimes he doesn't. All day yesterday he looked for work but didn't get any. We didn't have anything to eat last night.

"That is the result of our separation; there's nothing more. Except that he married a second wife when he returned. He lives with her now and has two daughters by her. When he does the marketing, he gives half to each of us."

The changing relationships and responsibilities within families and how these changes affect women, particularly, was a constant subject of conversation just about everywhere. A YWCA volunteer in Uganda spoke of those changes, saying:

"My father was a man of principle. He loved us and encouraged us to go to school and do good works. My mother taught me housekeeping. We were a happy family.

"But in today's world, families have changed. Peoples' attitude has changed. Previously, you didn't know to which parents a child belonged; there was no distinction among children or other relatives. The clan was responsible for all the children. But attitudes have changed: there are many broken homes. I believe it has to do with changing family roles.

"People are no longer responsible ...even for children. In the old days, the family made the man responsible for his children. He could bring all his children to his house and look after them. But not anymore. Today men can't afford to care for all their children; they don't seem to care. And the big question is what to do with irresponsible men? Even family planning, women are going to family planning. Why? Because men refuse. They just don't care."

From the younger generation, a different perspective often prevails. While at a university seminar in Japan, a talk with Japanese students revealed a

hopeful attitude, spoken by one but with which all seemed to agree:

"I want to choose my wife; I want her to work if she wants to do so; I want to be a partner with her: change the diapers of the children, take them to school, be a real father... but our society won't permit this. Men are cut off from their families in this country."

The evolution of sex roles does not appear to be an idle or passing fancy. In the most traditional of cultures the concept of equality, of the human rights of all people, including women, is seeping into mores and behaviour. A slightly educated midwife in a Salvadorean village had attended a course in self-esteem shortly after the end of El Salvador's civil war. At age 54 she admitted that the course had changed the way she viewed herself and those with whom she works.

**Below:** *The Salvadorean midwife with her husband and a 'helpful' boy.*

"Children are learning to help with household chores now. Traditionally a boy simply would not go into the kitchen, he would say, 'My sister can go and do it, not me.' But now there is an awareness of the illogical division of the sexes; we are instructing the males to become aware of the differences and similarities."

Changing roles, rising expectations, dislocation and mobility, and diminishing resources are concerns of families everywhere. Indeed, the family continues its evolution, struggling to meet the challenges of contemporary societies as it has always done. As we approach a new millennium, the family unit is bombarded with rapidly changing circumstances, certainly, but it is not in peril as some suggest. After listening to scores of families this past year, I am convinced that the transition we are now experiencing, albeit painful, is one among the many the family has survived throughout the ages.

That said, public policies to assist this transition are still in order. Society's sustainability requires a three-pronged approach: wise use of resources (conservation and environmental management), equitable distribution of those resources (equitable development) and access to the information and means to control one's fertility (population policies/family planning). The same elements could be called family-friendly as well. ■

PERDITA HUSTON

*Perdita Huston is currently preparing a UN-sponsored book of conversations with families in 12 countries in support of the International Year of the Family, to be published in Spring 1985 She was Director of the IUCN Population and Sustainable Development Programme, originator of IUCN's Women and Natural Resource Management initiative and has written extensively on population and development issues.*

# Women of the Fourth World

**As a contribution to the Year of the Family, Planet 21, publisher of this magazine, has provided research funding for two books on neglected aspects of the family: single mothers and widows. For the first of these topics, *Debbie Taylor* spent time with women-headed families in seven countries. Here she sums up the findings of her research and tells the story of one Chinese family.**

One of the main justifications for the International Year of the Family is the 'breakdown of the family' in virtually every country in the world. And the most visible symptom of this breakdown is the one-quarter of households managed by women without the support of a male partner.

This global total conceals wide regional disparities: in Europe, Asia and North Africa the figure is approximately one-fifth; whereas in Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa it is nearer a third.

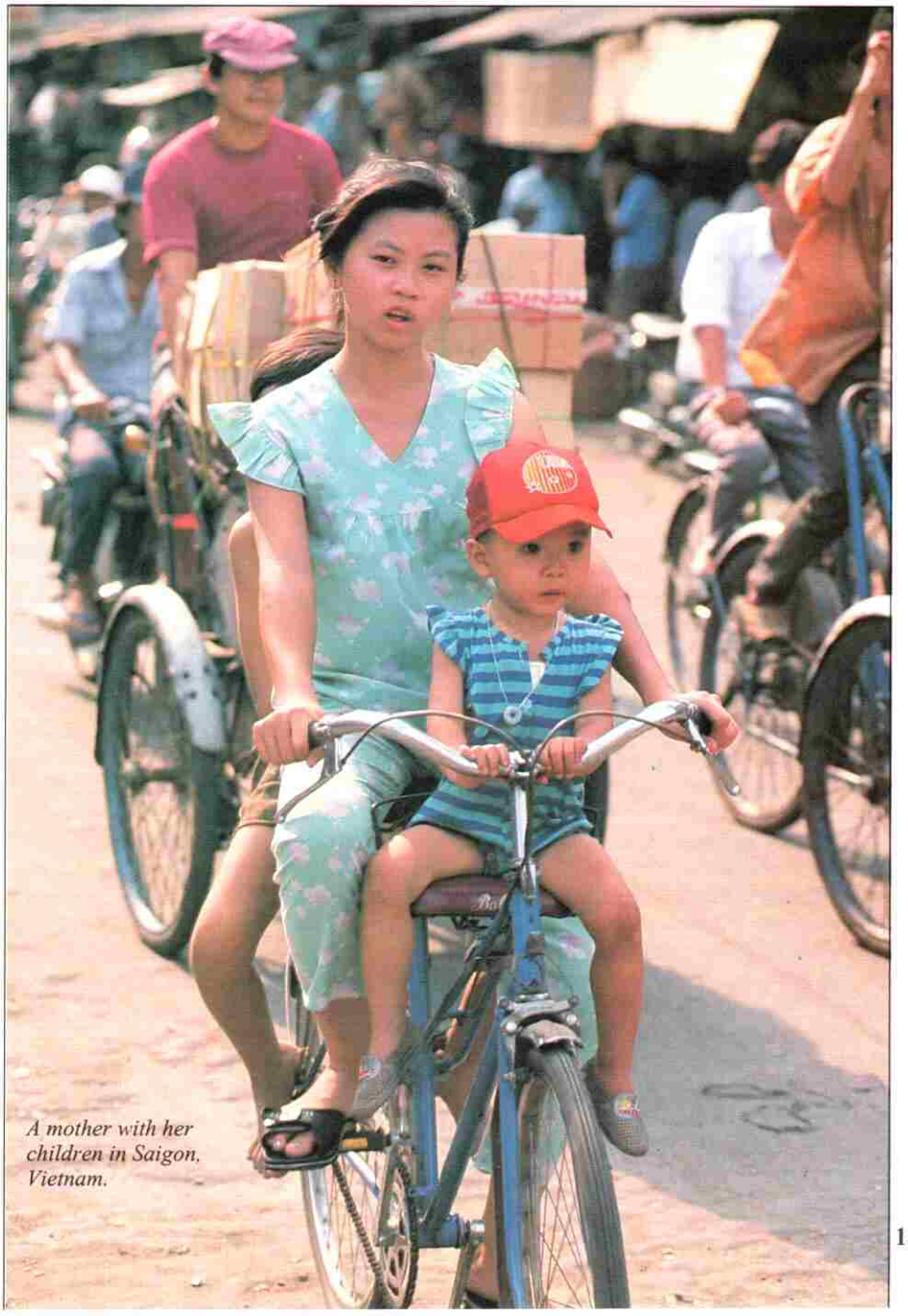
These figures are rising all over the world. In the United States, for instance, one-parent families almost doubled from 12 to 23 per cent of families with dependent children between 1970 and 1989. In Ghana they increased from 26 to 32 per cent of households between 1960 and 1984. In Brazil there was a rise from 13 to 20 per cent in 'woman-headed households' between 1960 and 1987.

This increase is not in itself a bad thing. But it is now well understood that households headed by women are the poorest of the poor, that they comprise an expanding underclass in every society – an underclass which contains around a quarter of the world's population. It is this increase in what I have called the 'Fourth World' which is responsible for what many observers have identified as the 'feminization of poverty' in every continent.

Recent figures from Europe reveal that, even in the rich world, single mothers are twice as likely to be living in poverty as couples with children. In the United States, too, the income of one-parent families is only a third that of the average couple-run household.

There are many reasons why single mothers are poor. In Belgium – where 36 per cent of one-parent families are on the breadline, compared with just 15 per cent of two-parent families – their poverty is due to a combination of dismal employment opportunities, inadequate state-funded benefits and the fact that they receive little or no economic support from the fathers of their children.

In countries without a welfare system, the failure of fathers to



*A mother with her children in Saigon, Vietnam.*

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shoulder their share of paying for the children becomes even more crucial. In Jamaica, 70 per cent of cases brought before family courts are mothers trying to get some kind of child-support from absent fathers.

The problem boils down to what sociologists call the 'dependency ratio', that is the number of wage-earning (or food-growing) adults divided by the number of dependent children (and sick or disabled people) in a family. A household that once survived on the work of two parents must now make do with whatever one overstretched woman can provide by herself.

On top of the loss of their partner's support, single mothers are also faced with the problems that face any woman trying to juggle the demands of housework and child care with any kind of work outside the home. Though their need for a full-time income is more desperate than ever, such women are often forced into low-paid part-time jobs.

This combination of overwork and sheer poverty takes its toll on the health of both single mothers and their children. One wide-ranging study in the United Kingdom found that "lone parents are in poorer health on all measures available". And research from many countries – Brazil, South Africa and the United States are just a few – has revealed that sickness and death rates among the children of such mothers are significantly higher than among children in two-parent families.

Given the reality of life in the Fourth World, it is clear that the majority of single mothers would not choose to manage their households alone. In most countries the decision is taken out of their hands by a man who discovers that a wife and children are no longer necessary for his survival.

In traditional subsistence communities, where labour and harvest are shared, men, women and children are bound together by the firm knots of interdependence, ties which are far stronger than love. But cash, jobs and wages loosen those knots and create new ones. Wages are tied to wage-earners. Jobs are tied to towns. The ties that bind women to child care and domestic work loosen last of all, so it is men who have tended to take the jobs.

In theory jobs for men and child care for women should sort people neatly into nuclear families. In practice the trend has been for men and women to separate, rather than cling to one another, cemented by their complementary roles in the nuclear nest.

Migration is one cause of this separation. In many of the poor world's cities men far outnumber women. And this global exodus of men leaves an equal number of women managing alone in the countryside. In some parts of Africa the figures are dramatic, with over 40 per cent of households in Kenya, Botswana, and Sierra Leone headed by women.

These women are doubly disadvantaged. They are often left without help at crucial times of the year, having to manage the ploughing, the planting and harvesting on their own with as much help as their relatives, children and friends can spare. And their rightful share of their husband's wages is often spent far away in the city, leaving them waiting in vain for a letter to arrive at the village post office.

But migration is not the only factor prising women and men apart. Divorce rates are rising all over the world, in rich and poor countries alike. It is now estimated that the likelihood of a

## Hua: a one-child mother

**A little-known consequence of the one-child policy in China is the high rate of divorce among women whose one child turns out to be a girl.**

**Hua, a curly-haired woman from Shenyang – the main industrial city in northeast China – is such a divorced mother. To meet her I travelled in some secrecy to Shenyang, with the help of my Chinese friend and interpreter, whom I shall call Kan.**

**Kan found me an apartment on the sixth floor of a seven-storey concrete block, with a view blurred by the smoke from a thousand factory chimneys. There she explained that Hua, like most of the wives who have been divorced for having a girl baby, was from the working class. "Their husbands tend to be more traditional."**

**"Recently," she went on, "they changed the law so a man can't have another child if he divorces his wife for having a girl child. But what happens now is that the husband beats the wife so she divorces him instead. Then it looks like her idea. So he can get married again, and father another child."**

**"Do you mind talking about your divorce?" I asked Hua when finally we met before she started her 12-hour shift in the factory. She smiled nervously and gave a little helpless gesture.**

**"I had to talk about it to the Woman's Federation, so I am used to it," she said in a dull resigned voice. "But I feel the pain again every month, when I go to collect the money from Husband's factory." "What money?" "He's supposed to give me 40 yuan for my daughter every month. It makes me feel like a beggar going there to ask for it."**

**Hua reached into her breast pocket, pulled out some much-folded pieces of yellowing paper, and handed them to Kan.**

**"These are her official divorce papers," said Kan, unfolding them. "It says: 'Reasons for divorce. Lack of affection, man is not happy with girl baby, he beats the woman often and does not provide money to support her.' Then it says 'the woman insists on a divorce'. That's what I told you – he beats her until she can't stand it any more. And here it says 'the child has been raised by the woman and has**

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**affection for her, therefore it is better that the child stays with the woman'. And then further down it says: 'it is better that the apartment should belong to the man.'**

**"I expect it's because it was given to him by the company, like this one," Kan explained. "Apartments are only given to male workers."**

**"So what did she get?" I asked.**

**"It says here that 'the man keeps everything except the following items' – that's because she was the one who wanted the divorce. They even made her pay a 50 yuan court fee. Then there's a list of the things she was allowed to take with her, mostly clothes. 'Red woollen tights, thermal underwear, jacket, old green trousers, old checked jacket, old flowered shirt...' It's all old clothes.**

**"Then 'a plastic fruit dish, one plastic apple and three plastic pears, two pounds of knitting wool, a picture, our small towels, a quilt, a clock...a washing machine, folding table, two wooden boxes, a double bed.' At least she has something to sleep on."**

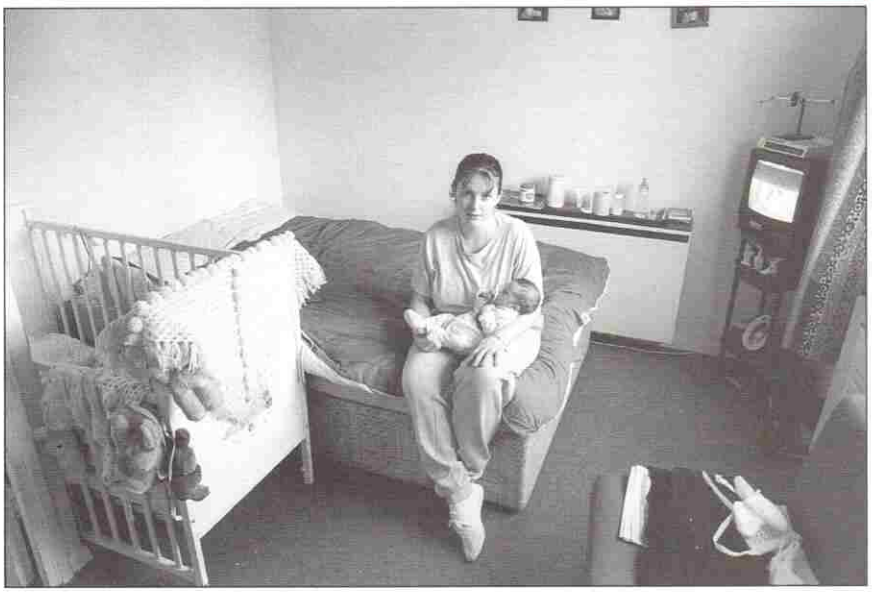
**I looked at Hua, sitting patiently while we exclaimed over her pieces of paper. She was still wearing the 'old checked jacket' and 'old green trousers', but she had bought a new scarf and trainers since this was written three years before.**

**As I found out later, her clean and neat two-room slum house down a smelly alley, with neither toilet nor bath, on the other side of town, contained little more than the items on the list. And the one small living/bedroom room had to serve for "Mother, Little Sister, Daughter and me," as she put it.**

**Hua's little daughter, Ling Ling (or little flower) was indeed a tender shoot. Thin and undernourished, like a flower grown in the dark.**

**"Would you marry again?" I asked Hua. "Oh no..." a decisive shake of the head. "I know I'll never find a man who'll accept Ling Ling." And she put her hands on her daughter's shoulders and turned her round to face me. The child's hair was glossy as a raven's wing; her eyes ringed with kohl. Her tiny mouth was rouged and Hua had painted a small red circle on her forehead.**

Extracted from *My Children, My Gold* by Debbie Taylor, to be published in July 1994 by Virago Press at £6.99, with research funding from the Swedish International Development Authority through Planet 21.



PHILIP WOLMUTH/PANOS PICTURES

**Top left:** *A sex worker and her children in Salvador.*
**Below left:** *Aids has left many women to cope alone, as here in Rwanda. The elder daughter, of 23, is one of 8 children, both of whose parents have died.*
**Below:** *A homeless mother living on her own in London.*

woman's marriage breaking up before her 40th birthday is one in four in Asia and North Africa and one in three in Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. Since 1960, for example, the divorce rate has more than doubled in almost every European country, trebled in the Netherlands, and there has been a more than fivefold increase in Britain. Over one million children in the United States see their parents divorced each year and in Barbados the divorce rate rose tenfold between 1948 and 1975. In Bangladesh and Mexico one in every ten women who have been married has been divorced or separated. In Colombia that proportion jumps to one in five, while in Indonesia one in three women who have been married has broken up with her husband.

Many of these divorces are the result of men leaving their wives. And it is men's economic power – the money in his pocket, the salary in his bank account – that levers him away from his wife and children. A man who works 40 hours a week for a low wage, for example, may see his wife and children as expensive nuisances. She is forced to ask him for money, he accuses her of nagging, and the pressures catapult them apart. A man with a larger salary tends to leave for different reasons. He can afford to treat his wife as a commodity, discarding the old to make way for the new.

But fewer and fewer couples wait for the commitment of marriage before starting a family. Less stable 'consensual' marriages – where couples cohabit without the recognition of a religious or state ceremony – are coming to replace formalized marriages in many societies. In Cuba, for instance, consensual unions more than doubled from 14 to 33 per cent of couples in the 35 years up to 1989.

Indeed childbearing outside marriage is becoming more common in every region. The increase in parts of Europe has been dramatic: only five per cent of births in Britain were to unmarried women in 1960; by 1980 the figure had quintupled to 25 per cent. The same thing is happening in poor countries. In Chile the number of illegitimate births increased from 20 to 32 per cent between 1970 and 1990; in the Philippines the equivalent rise was from three to six per cent. Increasingly men are fathering children but refusing to be fathers to them.

Migration, jobs and wages are strong magnets wrenching marriages apart. But death is the strongest of all. In many households it is not a living man who abandons his family, but a dead one. Because men tend to die younger than women and to marry wives younger – often considerably younger – than themselves, widows outnumber widowers in every region of the world. One in 10 women in Bangladesh who have ever been married are widows; one in 20 in Colombia and Mexico.

So what can be done to ease the privations in the Fourth World of single mothers? Employment and childcare are the key. According to Australia's Institute of Family Studies, women who had jobs throughout their marriages fared much better – emotionally and economically – after their marriages broke up. And a study of government support for single mothers in 15 European countries concluded that "the most important aspect of the child benefit package for one-parent families is free or subsidized pre-school care" because this allowed mothers to continue in – or begin – full-time work. ■

*Margaret Owen*, **a lawyer who has specialized in issues of women's rights and herself a widow, has begun work on a study of the position of widows and their potential contribution to sustainable development. The results will be available next year in a book published by Zed Press, in collaboration with Planet 21. Here she outlines the often forgotten plight of the widows in many parts of the developing world.**

# The world of the widow

The girl-child in many less developed countries of the South, may survive various hazards: female feticide, infanticide or neo-natal death from neglect, and she may well face others such as female genital mutilation, dowry death, childbirth and unsafe abortion. But she is very likely to spend much of her life as a widow, in often harrowing circumstances.

Widowhood is overwhelmingly a woman's problem. In India there are three times as many widows as widowers. In one African country it is estimated that 67 per cent of all adult women are widows.

Child-marriage, polygamy, the wide age-gap between men and women, war and increasingly the scourge of AIDS has greatly increased the numbers of widows, especially young widows. Women outnumber men among elderly populations almost everywhere, and the majority of these are widows less able, as in the past, to call upon children to support them in their final years.

When a woman commits *sati* in rural India, there is a public outcry all over the world. Yet little interest is shown in the misery endured by millions of Indian widows every day.

In widowhood, a woman joins a category of women among the most marginalized, and invisible. There is little research to inform public opinion or goad governments and the international community to action. Widows hardly figure in the literature on poverty or development.

Certainly in India and in many countries in Africa, and probably elsewhere, irrespective of religion, tribe, income, class, education, or geographical location, millions of widows are deprived of their universally acknowledged human right to shelter, food, clothing, and discriminated against in relation to health, work, dignity, and participation in the community life.

ALICE MASON

**Left:** *A widow in Uttar Pradesh works alone. Her face is spattered from white-washing her house.*
**Above:** *A widow in Addis Ababa.*

In Africa it is a common occurrence for the dead husband's family to "chase her off" her homestead, grabbing all the household property, even the children. Accident compensation, life insurance policies, pensions can all be seized with impunity. In South Asia, a widow may be secluded within her brother-in-law's household to become a victim of exploitation, a domestic slave.

The traditional obligations of the extended family to protect the widow appear to be weakening, partly under the pressures of poverty. Structural adjustment programmes and foreign debt have drastically affected the poor widow's access to essential services.

From all over the developing world there is evidence that millions of widows and their children live in conditions of acute insecurity, deprivation, and even violence. Civil laws of inheritance, customary laws relating to marriage, inheritance, land ownership and child custody, and patriarchal attitudes to women in general, appear to sanction such violation of women's human rights.

The treatment of widows is clearly discrimination as defined in the UN Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW), giving governments an obligation to address this issue.

Under the Convention, governments are required to remove all laws that discriminate against women because of their sex. They must also use all means to modify or eliminate traditional practices harmful to women and children.

Discriminatory inheritance and land ownership laws, constraints to remarriage, degrading and often life-harming mourning rites, traditions such as levies on widow-inheritance, and lack of access to credit, training and work are some of the matters requiring immediate attention by governments who have ratified the Convention.

This type of human rights abuse is not only most serious and widespread, but also has the gravest consequences for the children of widows, denied

# Helping widows in India

**There are more than 25 million widows in India, according to the 1981 census. Indeed, the proportion of widows in the female population – about 8 per cent – is comparable to that of agricultural labourers in the male population. Among women over 60, the proportion of widows is some 60 per cent.**

**Despite this, and the knowledge that widows are a particular disadvantaged social group, few attempts have been made to study the way they actually live.**

**Upon widowhood, most widows in rural India are subject to economic decline, social isolation and related deprivation. They are restricted about how and where they live, and in terms of inheritance, remarriage, employment and the kind of social support they can receive from within the community.**

**Findings of an intensive field study in seven states in India shows that the Indian widow tends to be a highly marginalized person. She typically receives very little support from persons other than her own children, and even when she lives with one or several of her adult sons she remains highly vulnerable to neglect. Further, her ability to engage in income-earning activities of her own is severely restricted, partly due to various patriarchal norms such as patrilineal inheritance and the division of labour by gender.**

**The consequences as far as one can tell from the limited evidence available, must be serious in terms of poor health and high mortality rates. This is consistent with the traditional perception of Hindu widows as inauspicious and potentially suspect women who, ideally, should lead a life of austerity devoted to the memory of their husband. This ideological influence, however, may be less crucial than the simple fact that widows are often seen as an economic burden.**

**The most effective way of ensuring the social protection of Indian widows is perhaps to help them to be recognized as persons who have something important to contribute to the household economy: for example, by protecting their property rights or by promoting their economic activities. For those widows who do not own property and cannot be gainfully employed (due to age or infirmity), the provision of pensions is an obvious measure.**

**The research project has found that there is already a substantial scope for improving the living conditions of widows. For instance, in most states of India, pension schemes of some kind do exist on paper, but they have a negligible coverage and impact. However, the government is unlikely to give adequate priority to the social protection of widows in rural India in the absence of public pressure. Putting state-based social security measures into operation is a big challenge for non-governmental organizations.**

**Similar observations apply with reference to land rights. Helping widows to assert and defend their basic property rights is another field where much could be achieved through public activism within the existing legal and policy framework, without waiting for the initiative and good will of the state. Several non-government organizations have helped in the current research and have agreed to undertake and document alternative measures in support of widows, including negotiating government pensions, securing property rights, supporting their employment and incomes, and promoting their social reintegration in the communities.**

*Marty Chen*

Dr Marty Chen is a Research Fellow at the Harvard Institute for International Development. She is the author with Jean Dreuze of *Widows and Well-Being in Rural North India* Discussion Paper No 40 of the Development Economics Research Programme, published in 1992 by the London School of Economics.

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health, welfare, education and therefore ill-equipped to contribute to their country's development.

Indeed, beyond such human rights issues lie many often profound consequences of such discrimination. One of these is of direct relevance to population growth.

Fear of an unsupported widowhood is often so great that women feel a need to have many children to ensure that there are adult sons to look after them in old age. One widowed mother of 12 children explained her reluctance to use family planning methods: "It could get rid of the one good son who would care for you". Family planning programmes might have greater success if social and economic policies were shaped to improve the widow's status.

The neglect of female children is another relevant issue. Studies in India have shown that the desire to have at least one adult son is much greater among women than among men. In widows' families, as much as in all poor families, girl children risk neglect in favour of their brothers. The poor Indian widow weeps when her husband dies not just for herself but for the dowryless daughters who must be married off as soon as possible, often to older men, so that they in turn become young and "inauspicious" widows themselves.

In Africa, education is the first expense to be scrapped when a woman loses the male breadwinner. Education is expensive. Sons take priority over daughters. And there are other cultural reasons why widows tend to keep their daughters at home.

Migration is another consequence of widowhood. Many widows in rural areas, unable to cultivate land or manage the cash crop without male assistance – and often in debt after nursing a sick husband – are forced to migrate to the town in search of cash. Migration is full of risks to unaccompanied women and their children. In the Mathare

valley shanty town, in Nairobi, daughters of AIDS widows as young as 11 or 12 get involved in sex-work in order to buy food for their sick and dying mothers. Policies need to be formulated that will support widows as farmers in their villages, and guarantee relevant education and a future for their sons and daughters in the locality where they were born. Access to credit and extension services, loans to start small businesses, appropriate technology and other innovative schemes to assist widows and their children to conserve and cultivate need donor support.

*"The night my husband died, his brothers came with a truck to fetch his body for burial in his village. They came into the house and ransacked it to find the money and his life insurance policy. They took away all our household possessions: the television, radio, the pots and pans. Even the blanket and the bed. They left nothing. When I tried to stop them they beat me and the children, and threw us out of the door.*

*"I was in such grief and shock from my husband's sudden death, that I did not complain for many weeks. When I did no-one would help me. His brothers took all the money, friends and other relatives donated at the funeral, which was meant for the children's food and school fees. Now I have nowhere to live and my children are ill and have no education. They accused me of having poisoned him, using witchcraft. They claimed that I was not his proper wife, for they had stolen my marriage certificate."* – A widow in Kenya.

The stigma attached to AIDS makes life for the widow and children of an afflicted family particularly hard. The widow's in-laws may blame her for the husband's death. They may try and force her to marry or co-habit with a brother-in-law. She risks transmitting infection or receiving it. She may not be able to remarry. She and her children may suffer abuse. Prostitution is sometimes the only alternative to starvation, in spite of the risks. If already sick, she will be desperately concerned about the future of her children. Schemes developed in Uganda by The Aid Support Organization, (TASO) have helped thousands of Ugandan women to "go public" about HIV, find work and dignity, and help other widows. But discrimination against widows in this context is severe.

Another aspect of widowhood relates to refugees, 80 per cent of whom are women and children. A high proportion of these women are widows, or women who do not know for certain whether their husbands are dead or alive. They may face multiple problems, in addition to the burden of bereavement and exile. Sexual harassment and rape during flight and in the camps are common.

Even in stable societies, the fragmentation of traditional family support systems, coupled with lowered fertility and longer life expectancy often leaves elderly widows in precarious financial circumstances.

Almost everywhere in the developing world, the poor status of widows must be seen in the context of patriarchal institutions – the custodians and interpreters of civil and customary law are male legislators, judges, administrators, police and traditional court assessors. "Living custom" and religion are likewise interpreted and enforced by male village chiefs, or religious leaders.

Governments, with few exceptions, have "reserved" in their reports to CEDAW, the subject of customary family law. Nevertheless, the negative aspects of custom need sensitive analysis.

Responding to a CEDAW questionnaire on violence against women, Ghana was the only country to identify the degrading treatment of widows as an example of unjustified brutality. Without empowerment through economic independence and self-help organizations, changes in the law will have little effect. What then can be done to help them?

Law reform, social support and the empowerment of widows are all urgently needed, as is research and public debate at all levels.

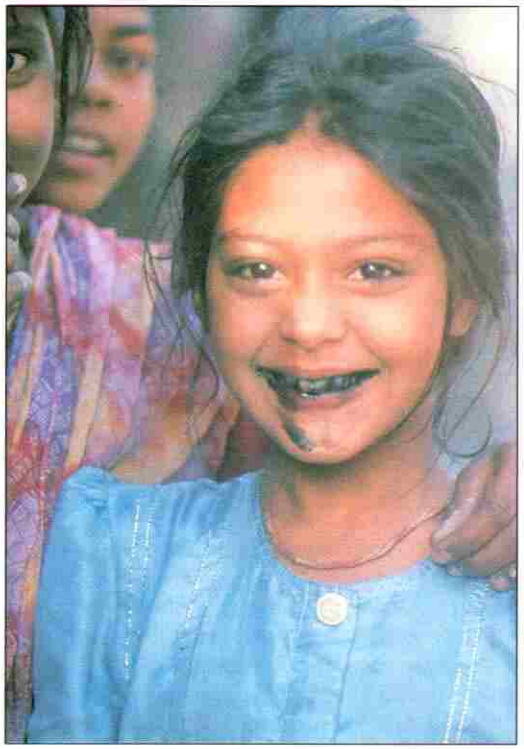
Women's Bureaux in various Southern and East African countries are now proposing changes in Inheritance Law and the Penal Codes to give more protection to widows and daughters. Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), has published a series of constructive research papers analysing widows' rights in the context of African customary law, the Women's Convention and the African Charter on Peoples' Rights. The International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), does useful work in many jurisdictions, taking widows' complaints of harassment, robbery and violence to court, and educating women about their rights and the importance of wills.

**Left:** *A poor Indian widow feeds her children.*
**Below:** *Mothers and children in Mathare valley, Nairobi.*

SEAN SPRAGUE/PANOS PICTURES

But widows themselves must be the agents of change. Networking between national widows' associations, establishing branches in every village, slum and refugee camp with channels of communication to the relevant Ministries, would ensure a two-way flow of information and provide a basis for much needed research.

The neglect of widows and their families causes great misery, not just for themselves but for society as a whole. It is vital that this subject is introduced on to the agenda of the three great world conferences on Population and Development, on Social Development and on Women, which will take place over the next 18 months – and that this forms part of the real-life agenda for change as the millennium is approached. ■



**Top:** *Lakshmi with her friend, the baker, who let her sleep in his shop at night.*
**Above:** *Lakshmi's neighbours.*
**Top right:** *Pavement dwellers prepare a meal.*
**Below:** *Lakshmi supervises her children's studies.*
**Bottom:** *Lakshmi indoors with her son.*

# The 'invisible' family

**Families are remarkably resilient in the face of many stresses. Here, in the first of two reports on street families,** *Bishakha Datta* **tells the story of one family which has built a life on the Bombay pavement. Pictures by** *Neela Kapadia.*

"It is a paradox that pavement dwellers are highly visible on the one hand – no one in Bombay can have failed to see them – but virtually invisible on the other. We see them only as festering sores which ruin the appearance of this allegedly 'fair' city – but they are invisible as human beings who have a history, a story to tell..."*

Although Lakshmi and Satyanarayan Naidu have been living on Bombay's streets for the last 20 years, the city doesn't know they exist.

Since neither was born here, there is no trace of them in the musty bundles that make up the city's birth certificates. Since neither works in the organized sector, there is no trace of them on union records or employee registers. No census-taker has ever knocked on their flimsy wooden door to ask how many children they have. Only when its bulldozers tear down their pavement hut does the city – backhandedly – acknowledge the existence of Lakshmi and Satyanarayan Naidu.

As woodfires steam up the morning sky, Satyanarayan stands up in their makeshift hut. Built on a narrow pavement strip, the bamboo hut is trapped between a building wall and the rumble of oncoming traffic. The ceiling made of black plastic sheets – is not high enough for the Naidus to stand upright. Satyanarayan stoops, shoulders hunched, and bathes in the tiny room that is bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.

Both Lakshmi and her husband Satyanarayan are first-generation pavement dwellers. While Satyanarayan fled family neglect when he was 11, Lakshmi ran away from a violent home with her mother's savings when she was 15. Both quietly absorbed themselves into the ranks of migrants who swelled Bombay's numbers in the 1970s: Satyanarayan as a construction worker on daily wages, Lakshmi as a domestic help.

"The city of Bombay experienced maximum growth in the seventies," explains Sheela Patel, who heads SPARC, an organization working with pavement dwellers. "That's when there was a wide proliferation of slums, that's when it became dense. People started living on the pavements because there were opportunities around large markets." Unlike the Naidus, most migrants were pushed here by economic factors. A 1985 SPARC study of 27,000 pavement-dwellers shows that about half the migrants had owned no assets where they came from, while another 25 per cent had only owned a hut.

But migration in the city didn't bring with it much more than a hut – and that too grew smaller every time a newly-arrived family squeezed in next door. "There were only two huts when we first came to Sofia Zuber Road in 1972," remembers Lakshmi. "Silence all around. A car would come every three days." Local residents would not let anyone build on the pavement during the day. "We would build at night during the rains." Today, 50 huts rub cheeks on that pavement – and the Naidus' hut has grown smaller and smaller.

This tiny space – presided over by pictures of Ganesh, the Hindu god of bounty – has been home to the Naidus for 20 years. Acutely aware that pavement-dwellers are not respected, Lakshmi bathes and cooks in here – unlike her neighbours. "In 20 years I have never bathed in the open," she says. And unlike her neighbours – who do not voluntarily use the free family planning services at nearby public hospitals – Lakshmi has managed to limit their children to two. "If I can keep these two alive, that's enough for

**We the invisible: a census of pavement dwellers.* Written and published by the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) and the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), 1985.

me," says Lakshmi, who insisted on delivering both her children in a hospital. "Once my son became chubby and healthy, I went in for an operation."

At night, the two Naidu children study in the flickering glow of the kerosene lamp – and cower as the police flash a torch inside, looking for thieves. And as the heavy tread of the trucks fades out at dawn, a water tank lodged in the adjoining wall erupts to life with "so much noise that you feel the eardrums will split."

Yet this space – where Ganesh's picture must be removed from its honoured spot every time there is a communal riot – articulates a long struggle for shelter in a spot where real estate goes at Rs 5,000 (US $160) per square foot. As a construction worker, Satyanarayan earns Rs 50-100 each day – when he gets work. "He gets work for 15 days, then he may not have work for a month," explains Lakshmi. "When the riots were on, he didn't have work for two months. We didn't have money to eat."

If the Naidus can still survive in

Bombay – India's most expensive city – it is because they live on the pavement, not in spite of it. When Lakshmi first came to Bombay – a girl of 15, alone – she slept outside the tentflap of the family she had got to know. "I used to fetch water for them everyday in return." Her fear of being alone in an alien city compelled her to propose marriage to Satyanarayan.

The Naidus' first marital home was a tiny wooden booth that was a barber shop by day. "We used to pay Rs 20 each month to sleep at night." But the birth of daughter Sridevi, now 15, brought with it a need for shelter during the day. The Naidus progressed tenuously: from a cubicle to an archway, from sleeping without eating, to buying one large pot where everything was cooked together, to buying another pot so that the rice and lentils could be cooked separately, at last.

Each possession – which represents a struggle to climb the next rung of a ladder – tells its own tale. The kerosene stove, for instance, marks that moment 10 years ago, when the Naidus got their

ration card. The ration card is every Indian's passport to identity – the one possession that families inevitably try to save when their houses are destroyed by floods, quakes, or riots. Until the early 1980s, the government had denied ration cards to pavement dwellers.

In 1984, as groups working with pavement dwellers pressured the government and women – including Lakshmi – filled an ambulance and went to the ration office, the government started giving ration cards to some pavement dwellers. Possession of a ration card, in turn, enabled Lakshmi's family to receive subsidized grain and fuel. "That's when we started cooking on kerosene," she remembers. "Until then, we used to buy firewood bundles for Rs 3 from a nearby timber factory."

That successful brush with activism led to a deeper involvement. In the mid-1980s, after a Supreme Court order upheld the legality of slum demolitions, Lakshmi joined Mahila Milan, a union of women pavement-dwellers. The union later won a landmark case for the pavement families of Sofia Zuber, the street where the Naidus live.

In 1988, after a violent demolition during which "all our belongings were taken away, utensils, clothes, food," the union went to court. The court ordered the state to pay the pavement-dwellers compensation worth Rs 25,000 – and ruled that crews had no right to take away personal possessions during a demolition. "It was not just a victory for the families on our street," says Lakshmi, who played a key role in the court case. "It was a victory for all those who live on the footpath."

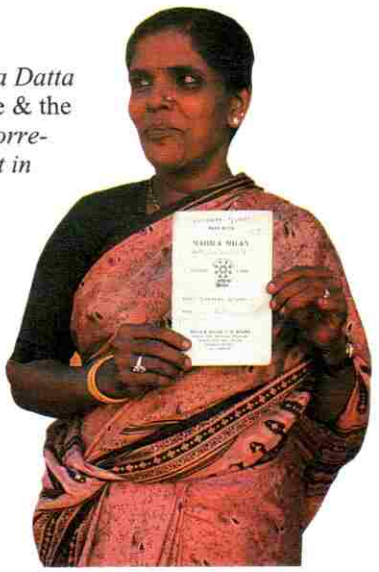
The 50 pavement families of Sofia Zuber Road are better off in other ways today. The regular demolitions of the 1970s have stopped, bringing a fragile sense of security. Families save small amounts each day as part of a union credit scheme. Water – which was earlier siphoned off from a tap outside a hospital morgue – is now more easily obtained from a nearby municipal tap. A public toilet is nearby, though at Rs 1 per person, it is expensive for a pavement-dweller who typically walks to work to save a bus fare of the same amount.

But most families still long for lasting security in the form of a house. Lakshmi – who grew up in a big house with servants to look after her – is desperate to shift to a proper house. Like their neighbours, the family puts by Rs 50 every month toward the cost of building a house in an alternative location. The house – which will cost Rs 13,000 – was designed by the Mahila Milan women with professional inputs. Endorsed by pavement-dwellers, it has a loft for a second family – and is considered ideal for joint families.

But a permanent house will remain an elusive dream unless the state pitches in, says Sheela Patel of SPARC. While the government has provided free land in three places, "these instances are atypical," warns Patel. By and large, the state continues to ignore Bombay's pavement-dwellers, who have increased from 20,000 in the 1950s to a stable 1.5 million today.

"The population of pavement-dwellers is big enough for the city to take cognisance of," says Patel, who advocates an official census of pavement-dwellers for a start. "You can't design a major intervention without this." At a policy level, Patel argues that it is no longer enough to invest in rural areas to stem the tide of migration. With increasing urbanization, "cities are becoming oases of affluence," she notes. "It is the right of every Indian to go there in search of a livelihood. City planning can no longer pretend to ignore this." ■

*Bishakha Datta is* People & the Planet *correspondent in India.*



*Lakshmi.*

# Rebuilding lives for the street kids

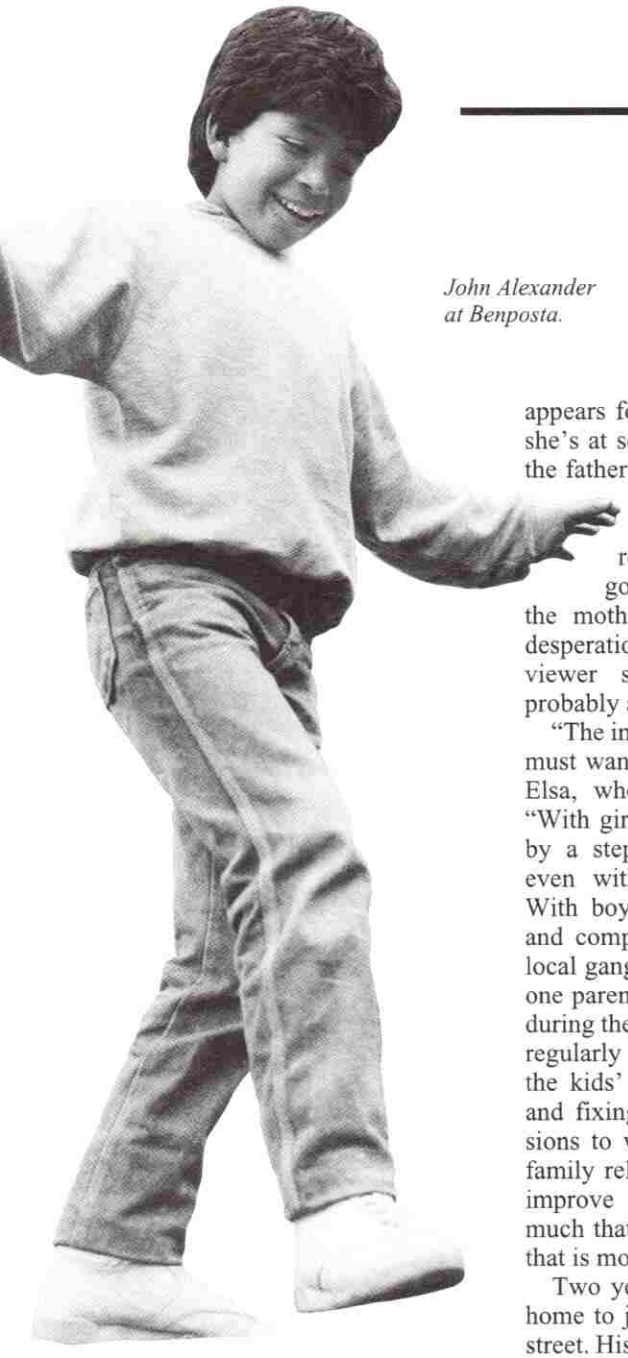
*by Sarita Kendall*

Social workers in Bogotá distinguish between street kids and kids in the street – the former have usually abandoned their homes altogether while the latter spend a lot of time roving the streets and are in danger of leaving home. To re-make the lives of street kids, who use glue and drugs and rob people at knife-point to pay for it, is extremely difficult. There is no family, school or community structure on which to build.

However, many institutions that work with children are focusing efforts on strengthening family ties where these still exist and on trying to improve conditions so that children 'at risk' do not leave home. "Our priority is prevention. We look for the child in the street and make contact and try to re-integrate the child with the family. No institutions can substitute the family," said Clara Ines Lopez, a social worker with the YMCA programmes in Colombia.

"It's usually a long-term process – we work on education, health, housing, family relations and income. At first you see a few small changes, for example there's less use of bad language and personal hygiene improves. Lack of affection, physical and psychological abuse and a difficult economic situation are the three main problems with these families. There are often five children living with the mother and no real father present – or there may be addicts in the family using alcohol and other substances."

At Benposta, a Spanish-backed organization with schools and special



*John Alexander at Benposta.*

SARITA KENDALL

education programmes for resident children, candidates were being interviewed for the next school year. One was a 10-year-old boy, Jhon, who came with his mother and a couple living in the same house. The man had had his jacket stolen by young muggers armed with knives on the way up the hill. The Benposta rule is that some adult – usually the mother – must take responsibility for the child and attend family events on Sundays. Whenever possible homes are also visited.

During the interview it came out that Jhon spends much of his time on the street and often skips school. His mother works 'days', washing clothes and so on, and they have one room in a large house. Jhon occasionally steals money and is beaten with a strap. "The boy is alone a lot, when he goes out the people in the house don't let him in, and if he's there he's a nuisance and they hit him. His father's been gone for seven months, sometimes he disappears for a year. His sister is older, she's at school, they fight... and when the father comes back, well, he adores the girl and he hits the boy. And I'm behind with the rent and I don't know what's going to happen..." At this point the mother broke down in tears of desperation. Afterwards the interviewer said that Benposta would probably accept the boy.

"The important thing is that the child must want to come to Benposta," said Elsa, who is charge of admissions. "With girls, the problem is often rape by a step-father or another relation, even with the mother's complicity. With boys, some are missing school and completely out of hand and join local gangs. In many cases there's just one parent, the mother, and she works during the day. The family has to come regularly on Sundays. They help keep the kids' living quarters up, painting and fixing things. And there are sessions to work on themes – sexuality, family relations, health. The aim is to improve the family atmosphere so much that kids can go back to a place that is more agreeable."

Two years ago John Alexander left home to join his eldest brother on the street. His brother said he couldn't bear the idea of John Alexander turning into a street person like himself (a drug user who has been in jail for killing) and asked for help from somebody who took John Alexander up to Benposta.

"I don't remember my mother, she died when I was two. I lived with my father for a while, so did my brothers. But they fought with my stepmother and went onto the street. Then my father died (he was shot) and I went to stay with his aunt. There are a lot of people in the house – yes, I went to school and I ate all right and they hardly hit me. But they treated me badly, they insulted me and said horrible things about my family, my brothers. I didn't think of anything when I left there, just that I had to get out. I liked Benposta right from the beginning. Yes, sometimes I miss the affection of a family... I'm going to go back and see them soon." He did visit the family the following week.

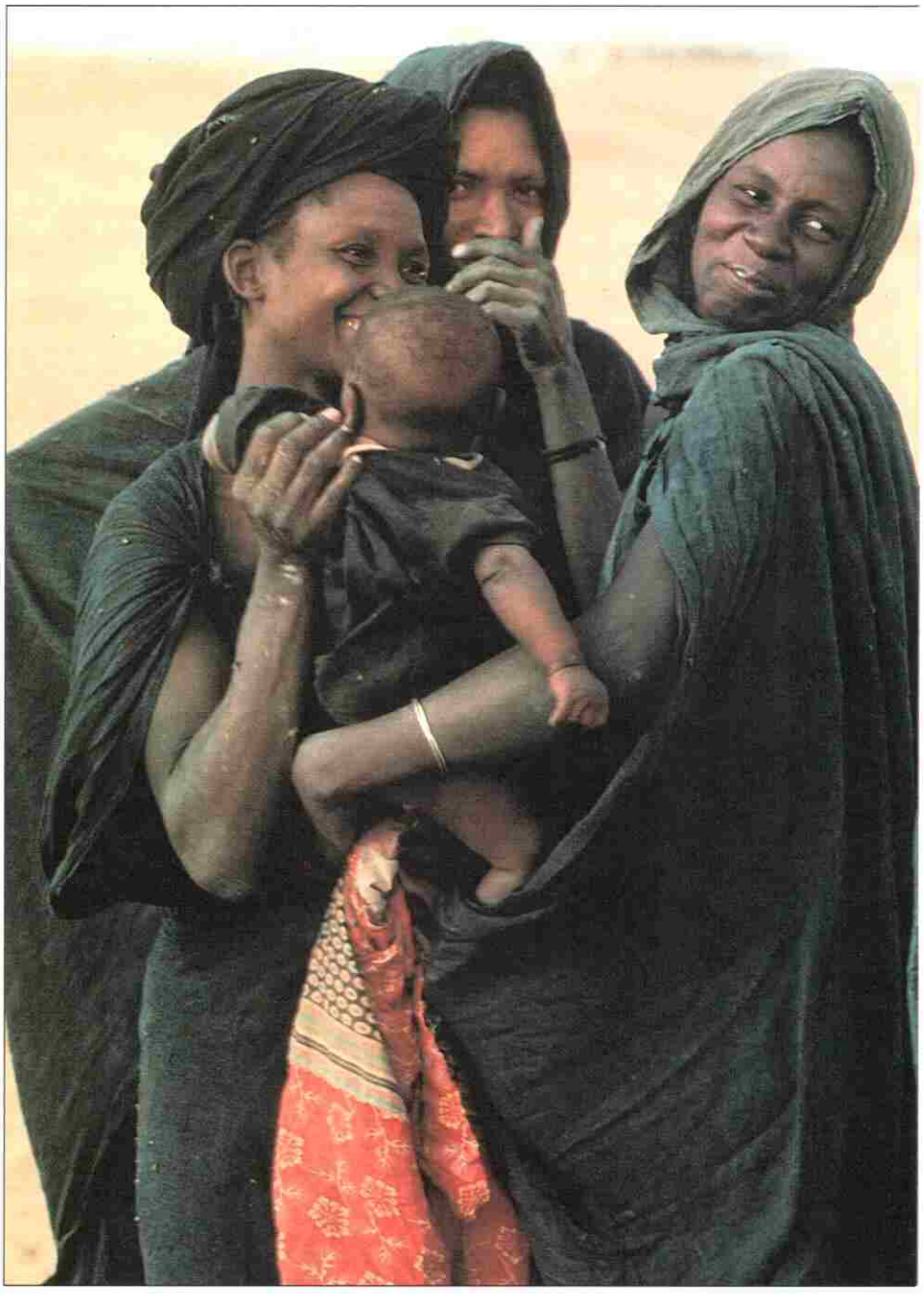
One of the striking things about Benposta is the friendliness and confidence of the children. Self-government, self-discipline and self-expression are practised with surprising success and both staff and children understand the true meaning of democracy There is special emphasis on sporting and cultural activities and the music and dance performances are impressive even by professional standards. Families attend and take pride in their children's achievements. But for many long-term residents at Benposta the problem is leaving: "It's like a tortoise shell, the protection from the outside world and its values," said Mari-Luz, who has lived there for ten years and now looks after younger children while she studies to be a teacher.

In most of Bogotá's low income barrios there are armed teenage gangs and drug abuse is rife. Public welfare organizations only skim the surface – the resources, personnel and integrated programmes needed to tackle such problems are lacking. Both Benposta and the YMCA are reaching back to families through children who are already half way onto the street. Sometimes it is possible to get results using this strategy in even less promising circumstances:

Tita, Rubiela and Nelsy are sisters. Their mother disappeared when they were quite small. Nihilists, a pretty, bright 18- year-old, was abandoned by her boyfriend a month before her baby was due. Rubiela, 17, and part of a street gang, has stopped sniffing glue recently and wants to go back to school. Tita, 14, cannot read or write and was deliberately run over by a car when on the street at 2 am. Her leg was badly broken. The only 'family' in their lives is an alcoholic father with sporadic work as a painter-handyman. The Fundación Renacer, which works with young prostitutes in the centre of Bogotá, badgered the father into taking some responsibility for the girls – he took Tita to the hospital, saw she got the drugs she needed, reduced his drinking and is going to meetings at Renacer. Minor victories perhaps, but at least a change of direction. ■

*Sarita Kendall is* People & the Planet *correspondent in Latin America.*

# The loving family?



JORGEN SCHYTTE/STILL PICTURES

"Good families", wrote Anthony Hope, "Are generally worse than any others." In his case good was defined by aristocratic breeding. Now that aristocracy has less currency and psychologists have made the family their particular domain, it is more difficult to decide which families are better or worse, and from whose point of view. Nevertheless, one problem I have with the International Year of the Family is that assumptions are being made about what is a good family. These are not spelt out, but they enclose some fundamental values, dear to some and troubling to others.

The people most affected by families are children, who have no choice about how or with whom they live. United Nations Covenants repeatedly state that the family is the fundamental element of society, but only the Convention on the Rights of the Child implies a particular model, that called 'traditional', labelled 'nuclear' by sociologists and probably one of the least typical in the world.

The Convention claims that for "full and harmonious development" of its personality a child "should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding". These are all Western notions – as are 'childhood' and 'family'. Studies of other times and places show that there is no universal human family structure. Families have different forms, varied moral principles and a wide range of relationships between parents and children, husbands and wives. All cultures have an ideal model of what these relationships should be regardless of personal experiences. That is why we may say "He is like a brother to me", or "She is more like my mother than my mother". We know what brothers and mothers *ought* to be like, even if reality is different...

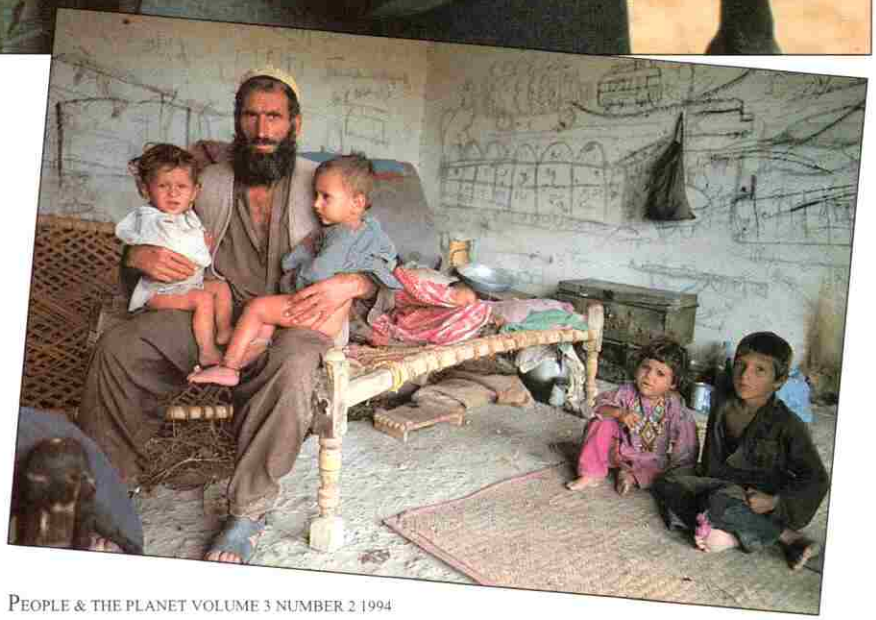
We are less sure about happiness and love. According to Western philosophy, happiness is worth striving after, better in the pursuit than in the capture, but the characteristics of a happy family are unclear. Love, in the sense implied in the Convention is an even more malleable idea, covering everything from romance to religion all derived from medieval and Renaissance European thought.

Somewhere in this imprecise morass a number of ideas such as marriage, morality, physical comfort and respectability cohere into an image of the happy, loving family. Without these elements families 'break down'. But let us look at some examples:

*Elena and Julio enjoy being Rosa's parents. They were both so alone before she was born six months ago. The pavement is hard, but they can beg for money. The place is Rio de Janeiro. They are 14 years old.*

Rosa's family stays together without marriage, economic support or housing. The glue may be a kind of love, based on Julio and Elena's mutual emotional needs. They pursue happiness as an ideal family, very different from the torn up relationships of the families they abandoned. Social workers would probably break up Rosa's family 'in her best interests'. They

**Below:** *Mothers with their children near Kiffa City, Mauritania.*
**Bottom:** *Father cares for a displaced family in Afghanistan.*



JEREMY HARTLEY/PANOS PICTURES

might be right. Poverty and external pressures could lead to abuse, but responsibility may also be the spur to finding work, getting a home.

*Mira ducks out of her shack and lights a fire to cook rice for her children, who are returning from their daily work on the streets of Bombay. They share the family meal in a space between passers-by, lorries, head-loads, carts, taxis and motor-rick-shaws.*

Poverty alone does not split up families. If it did there would be billions of loners in slums and shanty towns instead of the relatively small proportion of broken homes. Mira's family has not ripped apart, even though her husband is dead and the hearth is the pavement. The love and discipline she gives her children are in greater proportions than the rice she serves.

*Henk is sulky today. He doesn't like to talk about his parents. No, they didn't ill-treat him. No, they weren't short of money. So why did he leave home and come to live in a park in Amsterdam? "I was bored", he says.*

What does Henk mean by 'boredom'? Probably that nothing was happening for him. He lived with two parents in a well built house. It might have been described as a happy, loving family, but the relationships were empty.

The International Year of the Family seems to be based on the complacent view that happy, loving families have the right structure, in terms of numbers and types of persons, and live in conventional homes with respectable incomes. Certainly these can be helpful. External legal and welfare supports for Rosa and Mira's families would make an enormous difference to daily comfort. Nevertheless, without the special content of inter-personal relationships and responsibilities these would never have been functioning families – as Henk knows. We cannot, as yet, legislate for love. ■

*Judith Ennew is Visiting Fellow in the Department of Social Anthropology, Goldsmith's College, University of London. She is the author of* The Sexual Exploitation of Children, *(Polity Press) and (with Brian Milne)* The Next Generation: Lives of Third World Children, *(Zed Press).*

# Policies for today's family

JIM HOLMES

**As this issue of *People & the Planet* has shown, family relationships in all parts of the world are being transformed. Women are increasingly having to shoulder more than their share of economic responsibility, while a growing number of children must rely on a single female parent's resources for their wellbeing. Here, *Judith Bruce* calls for major changes in policy at all levels to meet this new reality.**

SEAN SPRAGUE/PANOS PICTURES

For most of the past 20 years, the predominant focus of population and development policies with respect to families has been to make them smaller – to promote 'family' planning and hasten population stabilization. But ensuring the economic and social security of current and future generations requires a much broader focus, one that at all levels of policy and investment seeks to increase the 'caring capacity' of families and communities.

The aim at each level of policy-making should be to promote three basic goals: increasing dramatically women's economic autonomy and security, encouraging the full participation and responsibility of fathers in family life, and addressing children's growing vulnerability as it flows from confusion and turmoil and occasionally irresponsibility in adult sexual, marital and family arrangements. This will require fundamental shifts in policies, as outlined in the steps listed below.

**Review and correct for gender bias in macro-economic policies and programmes.**

This should be done by encouraging consistent analysis of women's participation and benefit from socio-economic development portfolios. It will require, at minimum, the collection and publication of indicators that include data by sex. And ways will have to be found to extend women's share in new livelihood opportunities.

Women often are treated as legal juniors under family law and ignored by economic policy – doubly discriminated against on the basis of their gender and family roles. With the building of evidence of shifting family arrangements, diminishing co-residence of spouses, and women's growing economic responsibility for children, there can be no basis for policies that limit women's economic access based on their marital or fertility status, nor for the discrimination against women pervasive in the workplace.

To strengthen women's political and economic status, development agencies must:

- *Invest in women's productivity.* In the subsistence economy, this means securing women's access to land, credit, and other productive resources, in law and practice; investing in the extension, and popularization of appropriate labour-saving technologies; and including women producers as full partners in new institutions (co-operatives, credit unions and the like) and in rural development strategies.

In the formal sector, steps must be taken to break down sex-segregated labour markets and gender-biased wage systems. Planners should be made aware of the macro-economic and family-level, costs of discrimination against women in the market place.

- *Promote efforts to expand female education and reduce female illiteracy* by improving state-supplied services such as better infrastructure for formal schooling, more single-sex schools where needed, partnerships with NGOs to extend educational benefits to girls and women of all ages outside the formal school system and designing programmes that will lower families' resistance to girls' education.
- *Redefine reproductive choice* to include equality and choice in sexual relationships; whether, when, and whom to marry; joint decision-making

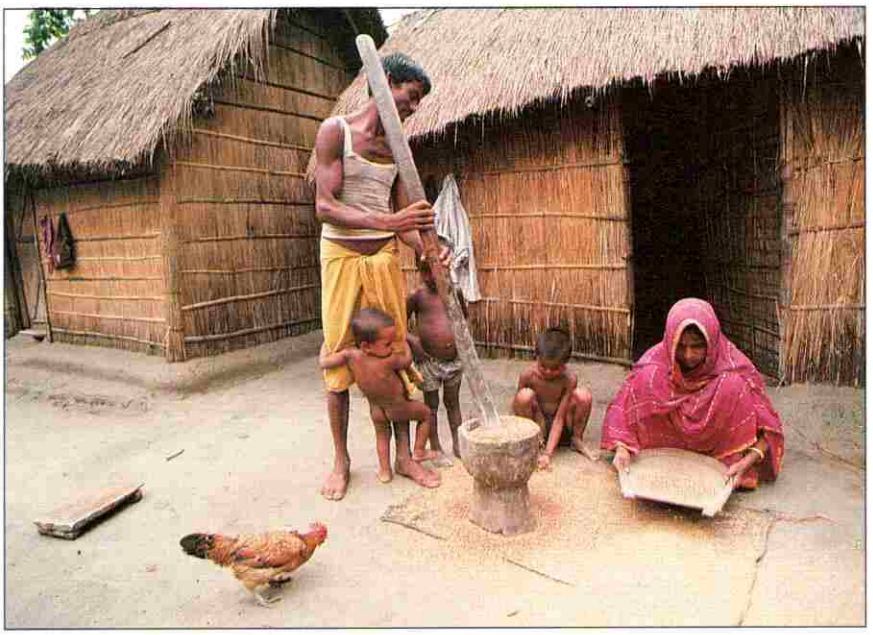
**Left:** *Girls take care of the children in rural Laos.*
**Below** *Husband and wife preparing rice in Bangladesh.*
**Below left:** *Attending an adult literacy class in Bolivia.*

over protection against unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; and shared responsibility for childbearing. It is time to eliminate all measures which assume the existence of a stable couple and which treat women as legal juniors by requiring spousal consent for the use of family planning methods. Although in part such ends can be realized through women's economic empowerment, public education campaigns and explicit changes in services are also needed.

**Expand fathers' participation**

Numerous studies indicate that many men simply don't know how to be fathers and that programmes even nominally concerned with family and child welfare provide them with little guidance and encouragement. Building and sustaining father's involvement in the care and raising of their children must be advocated both within policies and at the individual level.

- *Encourage and provide for the active participation of men in reproductive health care programmes, including family planning, pre-natal delivery and postpartum care.* If child welfare programmes continue to centre all their attention on mothers'/women's roles, neglecting even the imagery of fathers'/men's roles, vital opportunities will be lost to bring men into the process.
- *Train fathers how to be parents*, by bringing them into schools and day care centres to help with child care. Develop specific parent education materials and parenting classes directed towards the father rather than the mother.
- *Begin early to sensitize boys to the realities and rewards of raising their children.* Providing young men with hands-on experience caring for children through co-operative programmes in schools would be one way of helping young men learn the realities of family life. This has been tried in some parts of the United States. Measured results have been both an increase in boys' enthusiasm in the care of young children, as well as a substantial drop in adolescent pregnancy.
- *Include positive father imagery in information materials and in the popular media.*



PETER CHARLESWORTH

**Increase children's security**

Today, there is a growing recognition in both the North and the South that social policies need to become more supportive of families' abilities to provide for their members, particularly in terms of encouraging greater involvement and commitment to family and children on the part of men.

In terms of practical, day-to-day issues of survival, the most devastating consequence for children arise when parents separate, for whatever reason, and the likely plunge in living standards experienced by the large majority of divorced or abandoned women and their children. Though in virtually all societies it is assumed that fathers will continue to provide support for their children following separation or divorce, the reality is far removed from the ideal.

Few countries have adequate social provisions to ensure parents can help sustain their offspring. Migration policies and remittance procedures are not designed to assist absent parents in returning money to left-behind children. There are often clear biases against women (mothers) regarding family reunification.

Regarding the children of divorced or separated parents, child support laws, where they exist, either do not specify payment or define inadequate levels. And enforcement is difficult: many women do not have the resources to bring their cases to court and therefore have no legal claim over even these meagre resources. Policies that allow or even encourage fathers to renege on their responsibility to their children may reflect biases against mothers, but in fact have the greatest negative impact on children.

If citizenship means anything for children, it must mean some level of obligated support on the parts of states and families to whom they belong. Far greater support is needed for women whose economic burdens as mothers and heads of household are increasing. And more effort is needed to encourage men to share more equally in parenting. Brave, intimate, personal and family choices must be supported by sensitive, thoughtful policy. Our future does depend on it. ■

*Judith Bruce is Senior Associate at the Population Council. This article draws on a book on the changing family to be published by the Population Council in mid-1994. Those interested in receiving a copy should write to Ann Leonard, The Population Council, One Dag Hammerskjold Plaza, New York, NY 10017.*

# Australia over-populated?

What, Australia may have too many people? A land of almost 3 million square miles and only 18 million inhabitants? Yes, that is a question increasingly raised by ecologists and other scientists in the 'empty continent' that has been popularly supposed to need expanded settlement. After all, Australia amounts to 5 per cent of the world's land area yet it supports a mere 0.3 per cent of the world's population and accounts for only 1 per cent of the world's economy.

Australia is largely desert. Agricultural land is at a premium. An analysis by a leading climatologist, Dr Henry Nix of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, shows that the country possesses fewer than 300,000 square miles of arable land, most of it marginal by conventional standards because of its thin soil and lack of water. Well over one-third of this expanse is already farmed, and 70 per cent of it suffers widespread erosion, salinization, acidification and other forms of land degradation. No matter, say the cornucopians, these problems are not due to population pressures, still less to overpopulation pressures. They are problems of mismanagement, hence they can be readily fixed.

Agriculture lies at the heart of Australia's economy, hence it must become ever-more productive. In a sense, Australia is a Third World-type country that has made good, dependent upon agricultural products (some minerals as well) for export. The foreign debt stands at A$120 billion or A$7,000 per Australian. So farmers are required to supply food and fibre not just for 18 million citizens but food for 50 million people and wool for 300 million people overseas. Without these exports, Australia would not be able to purchase the many foreign goods it needs to sustain its affluent lifestyle. Farmers engage in much 'industrialized' crop growing as well as raising 150 million sheep and 24 million cattle (a biomass 10 times greater than that of humans). To keep on expanding the productivity of their crop lands and pastures, farmers use half as much energy again as in 1975, mainly in the form of petroleum-based fertilizer and biocides. Both these inputs are expensive and take a toll on the long-term fertility of the soil and the quality of water supplies, adding to the problems stemming from general over-loading of farmlands.

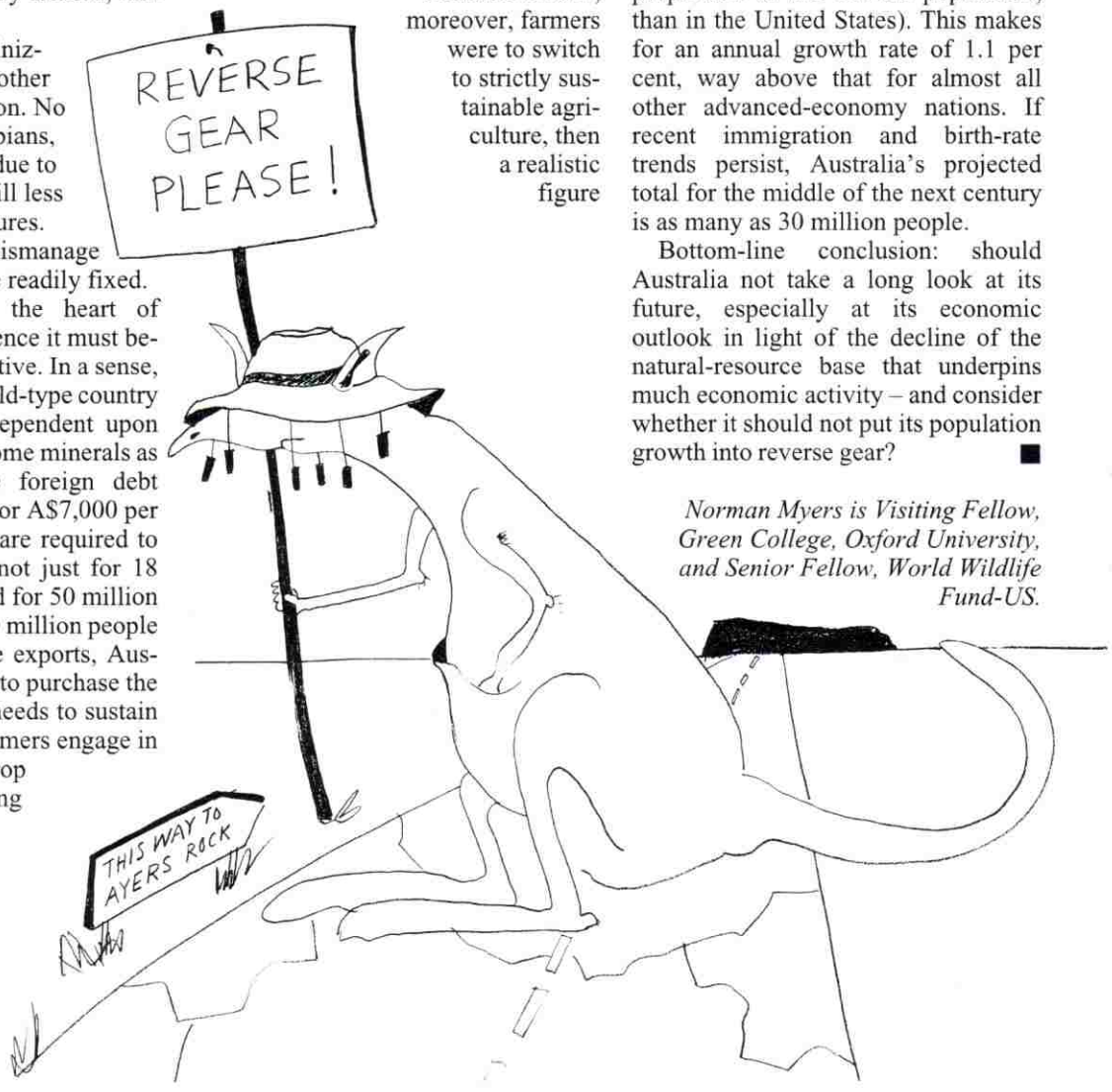
An assessment of the present situation and the future prospect has been undertaken by a prominent ecologist, Dr Tim Flannery of the Australian Museum in Sydney. He asks how things would stand if Australia were to rehabilitate its degraded farmlands (at great expense), terminate its food exports, and transform the forests, national parks and urban settlements in arable zones into farms. The country could then feed 50 million people – a total that Flannery emphasizes is a maximum figure, not an optimum or desirable one. If, moreover, farmers were to switch to strictly sustainable agriculture, then a realistic figure would be 30 million at most, more likely 20 million. When the analysis takes account of erratic climate, statistical uncertainties and other 'imponderables' that can make a ponderable difference, Australia might well consider whether it should not stabilize its population at 12 million people, conceivably only half as many, for the indefinite future.

For sure, parts of Australia could be opened up more. The northern third possesses 60 per cent of the nation's annual water supply (albeit highly variable), and much of its stocks of iron ore, diamonds, bauxite, uranium and natural gas. Yet it contains only half a million people in an expanse equivalent to Indonesia just 350 miles to the north (and with 188 million people).

The national population grows by over quarter of a million people per year, nearly half due to immigration. (More foreigners arrive to settle, in proportion to the current population, than in the United States). This makes for an annual growth rate of 1.1 per cent, way above that for almost all other advanced-economy nations. If recent immigration and birth-rate trends persist, Australia's projected total for the middle of the next century is as many as 30 million people.

Bottom-line conclusion: should Australia not take a long look at its future, especially at its economic outlook in light of the decline of the natural-resource base that underpins much economic activity – and consider whether it should not put its population growth into reverse gear? ■

*Norman Myers is Visiting Fellow, Green College, Oxford University, and Senior Fellow, World Wildlife Fund-US.*



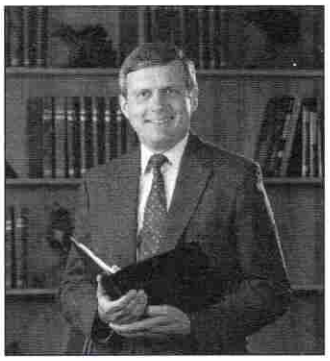
# IUCN ASSEMBLY News

## New directions promised

If IUCN members have their say, more women and citizens of developing countries will be installed in senior positions at the Union's headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.

Delegates of the World Conservation Union called for that new direction through a resolution entitled "Global Proportionality and Equality of Opportunity," approved during the Union's triennial General Assembly in Buenos Aires in January.

IUCN Director General-designate David McDowell welcomed the mandate, as did



Dr Jay D. Hair (above), elected during the Assembly for a three-year term as IUCN President. McDowell, of New Zealand, was formerly Ambassador to Japan. Hair is president and chief executive officer of the National Wildlife Federation, the largest US conservation group.

Said Hair, "We must include new stakeholders in IUCN – women, the poor, indigenous people, non-governmental groups from all corners of the world, North, South, East and West, religious organizations, labour and businesses."

Throughout the Assembly considerable attention was focused on the importance of empowering communities to participate in conserving and improving their environment. "Conservation is a social process. It is about saving nature, but it is also about saving people," noted Dr Martin Holdgate, who retired in April as Director General.

Dr Holdgate wants to end "the sterile, circular arguments" over the balance IUCN should seek between conservation and development. The Earth Summit had legitimized the role of conservationists not only in sustainable development but also in helping determine the course of global history. "We must adapt our functions or atrophy" he said.

In similar vein the outgoing President, Sir Shridath Ramphal, said IUCN must not confine itself to a backwater of nature conservation, but speak out on "the human inequities that lie at the heart of the environmental calamity" and "break the silences of Rio over critical questions like overconsumption."

Some 1,300 representatives from 125 countries attended the meeting.

## Local action

Because foreign aid packages often lead to only temporary, stop-gap measures for critical environment and development issues, IUCN members agreed on continued support of the Union's Global Initiative for National Environmental Funds (NEFs).

"We're only really going to get societies committed to caring for their own local environment if they have skills and institutions locally to manage their own resources," said Allen Putney, Director of Conservation Programmes in IUCN's Washington DC office.

NEFs provide local accounts for international or regional aid, for disbursal according to local needs and reflecting local interests in support of national planning initiatives. Some 18 NEFs now exist. Bolivia's (FONAMA) is one of the oldest and most successful with commitments of more than $47 million, 50 projects underway, and another $33 million under negotiation. While housed within the Bolivian Government, the Fund is independent with government and non-governmental representatives.

"Originally set up to handle debt-for-nature swaps, FONAMA's role expanded rapidly and it now handles investments in the environment. An exciting element is the way it succeeds in integrating government work with indigenous peoples and non-governmental interests," Putney said.

## Ecotourism defined

An emphasis on ensuring that local people are integral in conservation efforts was a theme carried throughout the IUCN Assembly. Ecotourism was one area examined to illustrate how to bring local communities to the forefront of ecologically sound projects that promote economic development.

An ecotourism project at Cuyabeno in the Amazonian region of Ecuador was among examples offered during an assembly workshop. In that project, local people directly handle the ecotourism enterprise, according to Hector Ceballos Lascurain, co-ordinator of the Mexico-based IUCN Ecotourism Consultancy Programme.

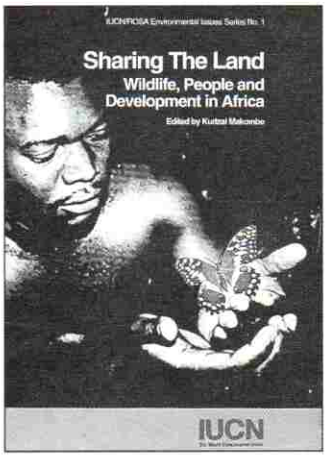
"They have constructed cabins for tourists. They have created an ecocentre away from the village, so that the community's ordinary life is not disturbed. They have their own handicraft centre instead of having to sell goods at $1 to people who resell them to tourists for $20," Ceballos said.

Ecotourism should not be confused with environmental tourism, Ceballos explained. Environmental tourism may be lucrative but not necessarily good for the environment, Ceballos said, noting how cross-country skiing is often considered environmental tourism, but can severely damage wildlife habitat. Ecotourism means low-impact sightseeing in natural areas that brings benefits to local communities, he said.

## Wild resources

Involving local people in conservation efforts in Africa is a matter of survival - for both wildlife and humans - according to a report issued during the Assembly by the IUCN Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA).

*Sharing the Land – Wildlife, People and Development in Africa* presents an African perspective on the controversial issue of




consumptive use of wildlife. The booklet presents more than 50 examples and case studies from Africa documenting people's use of wild species and offers new strategies for ensuring sustainable use.

## Global impacts

The ecological costs of national wealth was the focus of another report discussed during an Assembly workshop that provided insight into environmental accounting on a global scale.

The IUCN Netherlands Committee presented findings to be published in a report due out this year that takes a look at how much of a burden the Netherlands place on the world environment.

Among the findings: Dutch greenhouse gas emissions are double its share of world population, with 0.5 per cent of global emissions versus 0.27 per cent of world

population. Together with Japan, the Dutch import the most tropical timber per head of population. And, car density in the Netherlands is the highest in the world, with 134 privately owned cars per square kilometre, compared with 81 in the UK.

"Wealth, as it is currently defined, degrades the environment," said Wouter Veening, with a Dutch non-governmental group attending the Assembly. "Unfortunately, Dutch wealth also leads to degradation in developing countries. Low prices for raw materials, animal feed and wood products force developing countries into unsustainable production methods."

The report also concludes that West African countries suffer from meat dumping by the European Union, lowering prices on local markets making it unprofitable for local peasants to sell their cattle.

## Population threat

Explosive global population growth is the most urgent and threatening environmental issue of our time, says the new President of IUCN.

During a press conference in Buenos Aires immediately following his election for the three-year IUCN presidency, Jay Hair was quick to name population growth first, followed by global climate change, when asked to name today's most serious global environmental issues.

"Beyond a doubt, we must confront the tremendous threat of a spiralling global population that can push our planet to environmental disaster," Hair said.

While global preparations are under way for the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the issue of population growth was absent from IUCN resolutions during the General Assembly.

However, the topic was discussed during the IUCN workshop on global carrying capacity, and will be the subject of a special position paper being developed by IUCN for ICPD.

# Associates' News

## IPPF promotes Family Year

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and its member Family Planning Associations are taking a leading role in promoting the International Year of the Family (IYF).

The Federation aims to mobilize support for human rights during the year, including the reproductive and social rights set out in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and other UN resolutions.

Several FPAs are members of IYF national committees and have been involved in the regional IYF conferences which have generated national and local debate and action. IPPF has also worked through the NGO Committee on the Family to represent developing country concerns about family life education, responsible parenthood, women's development and male involvement in family planning, all of which contribute to family welfare.

The FPA of Pakistan has been awarded a $20,000 grant from IYF's Voluntary Fund to study the structure of family and society in Pakistan, and the changes which are threatening family life and education in that family.

At the World NGO Forum in Malta, during November, IPPF received Testimonials for its "important contribution towards the causes of families" and the promotion of the International Year.

## Manual for managers

A manual that describes procedures for estimating the economic costs of family planning services has been published by Family Health International (FHI) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

Designed to help managers assess costs of all resources used by the progammes, such information can help managers to decide which methods of family planning to provide, how to provide them and, if the programme charges for services, how much to charge.

■Methods for Costing Family Planning Services *is available from the Publications Coordinator, FHI, PO Box 13950, Research Triangle Park, NC, 27709, USA. Tel: 919 544 7040.*

## Training journalists

A training manual to help journalists give more informed and accurate coverage of reproductive health and family planning has been produced by Family Health International (FHI).

It is intended to raise the profile of health issues in the media, help journalists cope with the complex language of health professionals and eliminate or reduce the misinformation about contraceptive methods that so often damages family planning efforts.

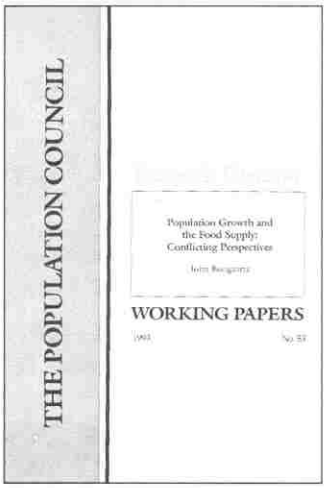
FHI's approach is based on experience gained in workshops for journalists conducted in Asia and Africa. The manual has been field-tested in Kenya. It gives details guidance on planning workshops, conducting needs assessments, setting objectives, establishing a curriculum, follow-up activities and evaluation. The 200 pages give numerous examples of specific health issues that are frequently misunderstood.

In another initiative, FHI has launched a five-year programme of research to assess the impact of family planning on women's lives in developing countries. The research will include various aspects of women's lives - self-esteem, education, employment and status - as well as their health. The ultimate goal is to help shape national health and family planning policies and programmes. The project is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

■Developing Health Journalists: A training manual for improving news coverage of reproductive health. *Family Health International, 1993.*

## Food prospects

"The future of global food production is neither as grim as the pessimists believe nor as rosy as the optimists claim," says John Bongaarts




in a research paper on *Population Growth and Food Supply* published by the Population Council.

He says the most plausible outcome is one in which dietary intake continues its slow upward trend in most regions, with significant fluctuations in availability and price.

The growth in supply will be possible through increases in yields and rising cropping intensities, and by some expansion of arable land. But rates of growth could well be slower than in the past as environmental constraints become more significant and as the developed world's demand for food is already approaching saturation levels.

At the same time many countries will have difficulty in improving their already poor levels of nutrition. First there are those low-income countries with little or no reserves

of arable land or water. Without the money to buy food or invest heavily in agriculture, they are likely to have to rely more on food aid. "Some form of global food bank would make the delivery of this food aid more efficient," says Bongaarts.

In other countries, with reserves of land and water, government neglect of agriculture and policy failure is the main cause of shortages. Here, policy reform, must be the answer.

A final cause of hunger is political instability and civil strife, notably in Africa. Unless there are major political compromises in such regions, says Bongaarts, the problem of widespread hunger and malnutrition will remain.

"Feeding a growing world population a diet that improves over time in quality and quantity is technologically feasible," he concludes. "But the economic and environmental costs of expanding food production to meet basic nutritional needs of rapidly growing populations may well be beyond the capacity of many poor countries.

"The actual course of events will depend crucially on their governments' ability to design and implement effective policies to address the unprecedented challenges posed by increasing human numbers, rising poverty and inequality, and environmental degradation. Whatever the outcome, the task ahead will be made more difficult if population growth rates cannot be reduced."

■*Contact: The Population Council, One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, New York, NY 10017. Tel: 212 339 0529, Fax: 212 755 6052.*

## A new 'hybrid science'

The interactions between population and environment are attracting increasing attention from organizations anxious to clarify the environmental impact of growth in human numbers.

The Population Reference Bureau (PRB), in a literature survey, charts the controversies that arose during the last three decades and cites the major contributors to the debate. While acknowledging that it is difficult to establish how population affects the environment, it assesses the state of knowledge of population's impact on the earth, including global warming, ozone depletion, loss of biodiversity, land use and carrying capacity, pollution, tropical forest loss, water and marine resources. It discusses how environment, consumption and environment interact and how cultural obstacles can frustrate good policy interventions.

On the same theme, Population Action International (PAI), in a primer for the general reader, warns that the absence of scientific evidence of the interactions between population and environment offers no excuse for postponing actions to stabilize human numbers. It quotes authoritative sources to demonstrate how rising human numbers magnify the destructive effects of human activities on the natural environment. It suggests that a hybrid science of population and environment is now emerging to explore and describe how demography, economics and the natural sciences interact.

■Population and Consumption Issues for Environmentalists. *Population Reference Bureau, October 1993.* Challenging the Planet: Connections Between Population and the Environment. *Population Action International.*

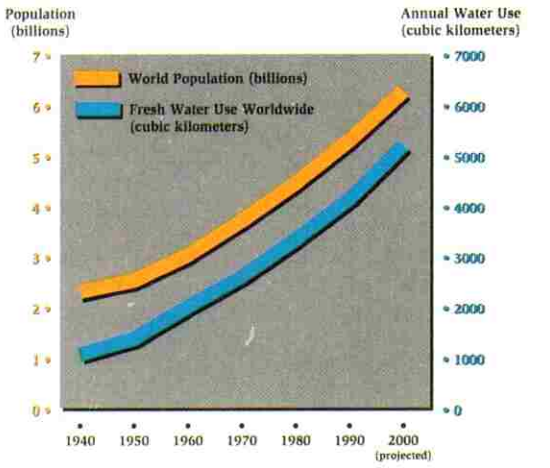
## Water stress

PAI has also launched a new series of studies of critical natural resources. The first, on water, argues that actions to limit demand on water supplies are as important as actions to improve water supplies, quality and sanitation. The report presents statistics on annual renewable fresh water supplies in 149 countries together with population data for 1955, 1970 and projected in 2025 in order to arrive at per capita water availability.

Building on the water stress index pioneered by the Swedish hydrologist Malin Falkenmark, the study finds that 28 countries experienced water stress or scarcity in 1990. Twenty of these - in Africa and the Middle East - had less than 1,000 cubic metres per person per year. PAI estimated that, with population growth, 46 to 52 countries could be in this position by 2025, resulting in more than 2.7 billion people living in conditions of water stress or scarcity.

■Sustaining Water: Population and the Future of Renewable Water Supplies. *Population Action International, November 1993.*

**WORLD POPULATION AND FRESH WATER USE, 1940 TO 2000**




*Since 1940, the amount of fresh water used worldwide has quadrupled as world population has doubled.*

## Hearing about vasectomy

Kenyan men know little about vasectomy, but they are interested and want to learn more, according to research conducted by the Association for Voluntary Surgical Contraception. The research is described in an AVSC working paper: *Vasectomy in Kenya: The First Steps.*

The studies conducted in the rural area of Chagoria, found that over 80 per cent of men wanted information about vasectomy. In Nairobi, almost half of men surveyed said they wanted to learn more.

For a variety of reasons, vasectomy is rarely performed in Sub-Saharan Africa. AVSC has begun laying the groundwork for services by training doctors, sponsoring a 1990 national workshop on vasectomy, conducting a media campaign about the method, and providing support for male-only clinics.

■*Contact: AVSC Materials Resources Department, 79 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, fax, 212-779-9439.*

## TV talkshow

*Family Time with Mercedes Erazo* (En Familia con Mercedes Erazo), a popular afternoon talkshow for women on Ecuadoran TV, recently highlighted family planning issues every day for a week. Short, 2-3 minute mini-video reports were followed by interviews with family planning experts, and by live phone-ins.

The National Committee, which created the video reports and accompanying interview guides, has been seeking new TV 'windows' or programming slots as well as new faces to convey family planning-related issues.

A matching grant for this project from The John Hopkins University Population Communication Services/Population Information Program encourages innovative approaches for pilot communication productions.

■*Contact: JHU/PCS, 527 St Paul Place, Baltimore, MD 21202. Fax: (410) 659-6266.*

# FILMS

## Families in the South

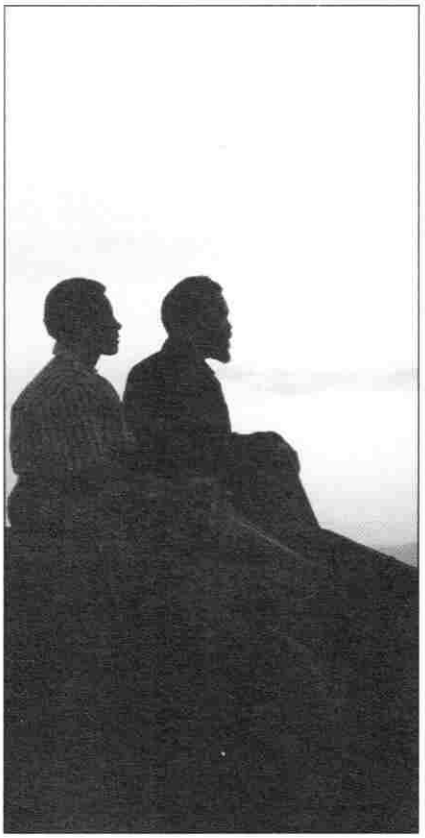
*by Jenny Richards and Elizabeth Frankl*

Particularly relevant in the United Nations International Year of the Family, three recent films – two dramas from Indonesia and one from Zimbabwe – look at families in the South struggling with such issues as poverty, economic exploitation and the changing role of women.

In *Anaka Hilang (The Lost Child)*, 12-year-old Basri skips school to wander around the streets of Jakarta. He dreams of becoming a magician to escape from the poverty of the kampong where he and his family live. His father Baco – like the other residents – was once a fishermen, but now works for subsistence wages loading and unloading cargo ships. They are 'people of the sea' living in filthy, sprawling shacks, which are propped up on stilts over seven hectares of stagnant water. Blocked off by city development, the estuary is choked with garbage. Slamet Rahardjo Djarot's film tells the story of one family's desperate attempt to escape the squalor that surrounds them.

The residents are bullied by the shipping company to accept a meagre compensation fee to leave their homes. Most leave, but Baco and his wife Simini resolve to hold out for as much money as possible. When Simini is killed by a hit-and-run driver, Baco is grief-stricken and obsessed by thoughts of revenge. Determined not to end up like his father, Basri runs away and joins a renegade band of travelling performers, pretending that he is an orphan. When Basri's lie is revealed the troupe leader accompanies him back to the kampong. Basri finds his father beaten up by company thugs. Their emotional reunion marks a significant change for both father and son: they realize that their hope for the future depends on the strength and unity of their family.

Also produced by Johns Hopkins University and Indonesian TV, *Arak Arakan (Procession)* shows a marriage and a community dissolve when the land is threatened. When Dadang and Ceu Awang decide to marry, Dadang sells his family rice fields to a friend. The middleman in the deal is the unscrupulous Djaubari, who allows the fields to be used as part of a sand mining project. As Dadang's plots are dredged, water is diverted, and the fields which belong to others – including Ceu Awang's brother – are left dry. Guilty and ashamed, Dadang flees the village and Ceu Awang to work on construction sites in Jakarta. Ceu Awang is left destitute and is forced to become a performer in a crude dance troupe patronized by Djaubari. Teguh Karya – one of Indonesia's best directors – lingers over the beauty of the Indonesian countryside and celebrates traditional culture in this compelling drama.



*Neria: a triumphant film from Africa.*

Another indigenous drama production with a development theme made women's rights a surprise hit in Zimbabwe last year. Godwin Mawuru's feature film *Neria* pulled bigger audiences than even Arnold Schwarzenegger's robot-man sequel *Terminator 2*.

Neria is one of a new generation of women in Zimbabwe. She lives in town and works to bring home her share of the family income. She and her husband Patrick take joint decisions on how to raise their children and spend their money. They have a happy, loving marriage – and big plans for the future. The only shadow is cast by Patrick's family who still lives in the family village: Patrick's mother disapproves of Neria's urban lifestyle; Patrick's brother, a feckless scrounger, mocks Patrick for treating Neria as an equal. And then disaster strikes. Patrick is knocked off his bicycle and killed. As Neria struggles with her grief, her brother-in-law takes possession of her house, furniture, children, car, savings – and even his own brother's widow.

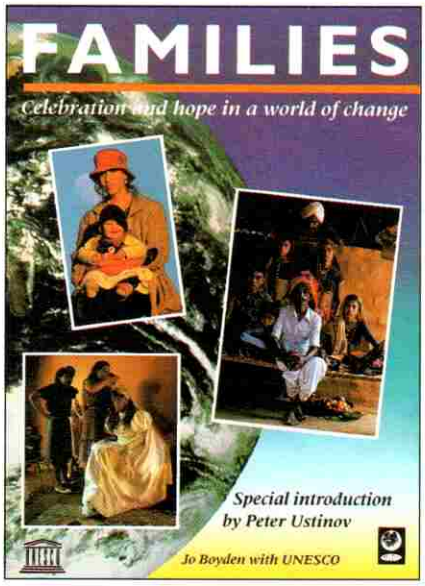
Traditional wisdom in Zimbabwe dictates that when a man dies, his immediate family look after his wife and children. In Neria's case, this translates into robbing her of everything. When finally the lock on the door of her own house is changed so that she can't get in, she breaks down. But a friend sends her to a lawyer who will help her fight back, under Zimbabwean laws designed to protect widows' rights. In a tense courtroom scene, Neria defends her rights as an independent woman to manage her own affairs. Produced by John and Louise Riber from the Media for Development Trust in Harare, *Neria* is a small triumph: a home-grown Zimbabwean morality tale on the need for women to take control of their own lives if there is to be real development in Africa. ■

■ *Development through Self-Reliance, Inc. (DSR) is distributing free catalogues of its top-quality African films and videos including* Neria. *Made by Africans and designed primarily for African audiences, the videos cover a variety of social issues, including AIDS, teenage pregnancy, family planning, training, health and hygiene, the environment and women's issues. Contact: DSR, 9111 Guilford Road, Suite 100, Columbia, MD 21046, USA. Tel: 800-875- 0037, Fax: 301-490-4146.*

# BOOKS

## Celebrating the family

**Families - celebration and hope in a world of change** Jo Boyden with UNESCO *Gaia Books, 1993, £14.99.*




This beautifully produced book, celebrating the UN International Year of the Family, successfully reflects the diversity of the world-wide family experience in pictures, texts and statistics.

Its images range from vibrant scenes of traditional weddings in different ethnic communities to pictorial explorations of painful but frequent situations such as children trapped in unhappy situations by gender or poverty.

One especially striking image is that of an indigenous group of hunter gatherers in the outer Philippines – a family doomed, it would seem, to speedy assimilation and modernization.

In his Introduction, Peter Ustinov defines the family as "the most desirable yet most complicated of all tests of character on the Earth." He also comments that "Religious leaders and politicians tend to idealize the family unit, maintaining that it is the vital element in the structure of society."

Certainly few families would choose to dissolve or disintegrate, but in the real world children are separated from their families by war, poverty, unemployment, disease, enforced labour and disability, as well as by parental violence and neglect – a separation which all too often leads to loneliness, alcoholism, drug abuse, prostitution, disease and further poverty.

As this book makes clear, family disintegration is putting an increasing strain on society's traditional view of how families are structured.

In Japan, grandparents isolated from their families can now rent a 'family' for lunch and a few hours conversation. They just dial a Tokyo number and ask for a daughter, son-in law and two grandchildren, for example. Soon after, the 'family' arrives and greets the elderly person emotionally. Three hours costs $1130 plus transport.

Statistical information is represented sensitively with graphic and colourful clarity. A world map of children who inherit HIV shows dramatically how much larger, at present, the problem is in Africa than in any other part of the world. Another map illustrates that the leaders of the world may pay homage to the rights of children, but when it comes to spending, they would often rather buy arms than education. UNICEF has estimated that it would cost $25 billion a year to halve the rate of child malnutrition, control childhood diseases and provide almost every boy and girl with at least a basic education. This sum is equal to ten days global military spending.

However, the graphic images would be more useful if actual figures had been given. While references point to where further information can be found, the graphs, in this form, cannot be used as substantive source material.

Jo Boyden's text manages a balance between anecdotes and hard fact. She lightens this brief survey of a huge subject with well chosen anecdotes, which vividly illustrate the points with human interest. Madan Ran, aged seven, was rescued , with two other boys, from slavery as a carpet maker in a village in India. An estimated 300,000 other children are still working away from their parents, for nothing but one small meal a day, making carpets, often in the semi-darkness. The South Asian Coalition argues there should be a total boycott of Indian hand-made carpets until there is an effective way of ascertaining they have been made by adults.

The population issue is addressed with a broad picture of birth prevention methods ranging from the Chinese Government's 'one child' policy to a discussion of the moral arguments about safe abortion services in Western countries. The case of Brazil is especially instructive. There, government policy limits access to reversible contraceptives, such as condoms and diaphragms, and as a result, some 41 per cent of contraceptive users resort to sterilization. Abortion is a criminal offence but an estimated four million a year are illegally performed, or some 10 per cent of the world's total.

The number of children in each family may be falling, but with increasing life expectancy, there are now more families of four generations, often living under the same roof. The extended family may be shrinking horizontally, while extending vertically.

An appendix to the book reproduces the Guiding Principles on the Family created by the NGO Committee on the Family. This reflects the functions, rights and responsibilities of the family and opens the way to a future UN Declaration on the subject.

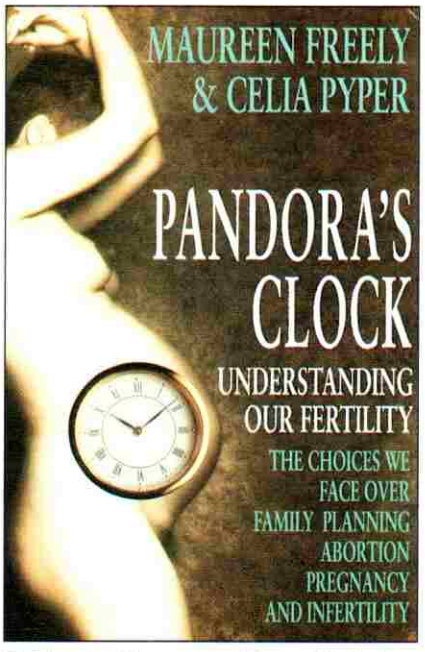
Article 11, for example, upholds the "right and responsibility of parents to provide guidance, appropriate to the child's evolving capacities.....without infringing on the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience and expression." A brave statement, but how many adults in the world have these rights? And would this mean that we cannot send our children to bed, in case it overrides their right to the freedom of watching television?

*Janie Hampton*

Janie Hampton is the author of several books on international health and the mother of four adolescent children.

## Unplanned parenthood

**Pandora's Clock: Understanding our Fertility**
Maureen Freely and Celia Pyper
*Heinemann, 1993. £8.99*


MAUREEN FREELY
& CELIA PYPER
PANDORA'S CLOCK
UNDERSTANDING OUR FERTILITY
THE CHOICES WE FACE OVER FAMILY PLANNING ABORTION PREGNANCY AND INFERTILITY

This book will come as a blast of fresh air to those who have read too many dry and

**Right:** *Father and son bathing in a river in Sri Lanka.*

dusty papers talking about 'planned pregnancies', 'responsible parenthood,' and so on. This book looks behind the scenes and examines the real facts behind people's decisions to have children. Women report that they feel 'broody.' They may want a baby even though they recognize that this may not be sensible at this time in their lives. Or they may realize that it's time they had a baby, but put off the decision from month to month because they can't quite face the responsibility. Women in this situation tend to become careless about contraception, perhaps changing from a more reliable method like the IUD to a less reliable one like the diaphragm.

When women have an unplanned pregnancy they say things like, "I thought if I got up to put in my diaphragm, he'd change his mind," "I thought I was infertile," or "I forgot the Pill and antibiotics don't mix."

Women report considerable ambivalence to the idea of having a baby; it is perfectly possible to both want to become pregnant and not to at the same time. Because an unplanned pregnancy can happen in five minutes of abandonment, women who wanted to get pregnant can change their mind and, in the cold light of day, seek an abortion. The divide between 'wanted' and 'unwanted' is less clear than we might think; for many reasons, wanted pregnancies end in terminations and unwanted conceptions result in much-loved children.

Men can be as ambivalent as women in their reactions to a pregnancy. Further, men and women's views do not always coincide. Is a pregnancy 'wanted' if one partner wants it and the other doesn't? Who has the ultimate say? .

Although this book makes no conclusions, it does offer an insight into why we will never reach that ideal state in which everyone makes rational decisions about when and how many children to have. By looking into the darker and more irrational side of human motivations, it should give us all much food for thought.

*Maggie Jones*

Maggie Jones is a writer on health and fertility issues.

# Mapping migration

**An Atlas of International Migration**
Aaron Segal
*Hans Zell, London, 1993, £65*

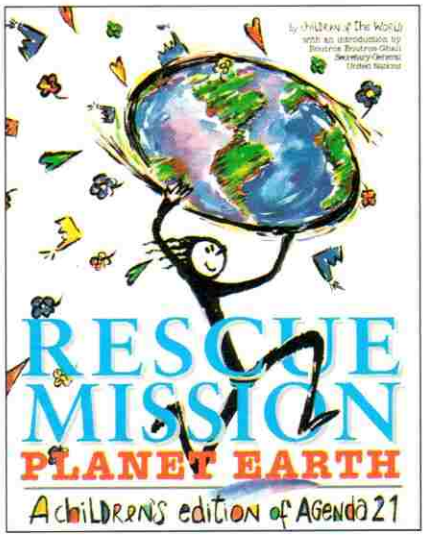
This first comprehensive atlas of human migration begins with the 150,000-year movement of mankind out of Africa into every continent and island, except for frozen Antarctica.

Later sections tell the story of voluntary and involuntary migrations after 1500, including the contemporary diasporas and the mass movement of people in the last two centuries as steamships and other forms of cheap transport eased the search for new opportunities in new worlds.

Detailed maps and notes, on every aspect of migration, make this an invaluable source for anyone interested in how the movement of people shaped our world in the past, and promises to change it in the future.

# Children's guide

**Rescue Mission: Planet Earth – A Children's Edition of Agenda 21**
*Kingfisher Books, London, 1994, £6.99 pb, £9.99 hb/$9.95 pb, $14.95 hb*




This superbly illustrated children's guide to the Earth Summit's recommendations, draws on submissions from about 100,000 children in 100 countries, plus 50 experts who were interviewed.

The result is without doubt the most readable and attractive summary of the original long and bureaucratic document. Every page is filled with the most imaginative and colourful images, children's comments and insights from their local experience, poems and crisply-written facts. Here is concern for our planet, expressed with imagination and packaged with flair. A present for any child, and a hopeful document for any grown up.

*John Rowley*

# Restoring the Amazon

**The Green Cathedral: Sustainable Development of Amazonia**
Juan de Onis
*Oxford University Press 1992. £17.95*

What future for the Amazon Basin, the largest tropical rain forest in the world, and home to an estimated 16 million settlers, 15 million head of cattle, and 500,000 rubber tappers and Amer-Indians?

Juan de Onis, former South America correspondent of the *New York Times*, provides an intelligent, readable, informed and optimistic assessment of the past, present and future prospects of Amazonia. His empirically documented conclusion is that "there are signs on the Amazon frontier that cattle ranchers, large-scale miners, land developers, small farmers, lumbermen, and forest product extractors are beginning to change behaviours that have been the main causes of environmental damage."

"The main problem in the region is the presence of a very large floating population of landless peasants who are destroying remaining stands of forest." The problem is not to expel these settlers who have nowhere else to go but to provide extension services and credit to enable them to establish stable communities which are ecologically sound and capable of sustained growth.

While documenting the horrors of deforestation, frontier violence, mining depredations, degraded pastures and other Amazonian experiences, the author also details research examples which are working to generate sustainable development.

These include fast-growing eucalyptus to restore degraded land and to provide charcoal for labour-intensive pig-iron, kudzu plants to restore pastures, closed retorts to limit mercury contamination in gold mining, use of helicopters for oil drilling to avoid bull-dozing roads, hybrid tropical cattle with high calving rates and other successful adaptations. Less successful are the efforts to establish "extractive reserves" which rely on subsidized international marketing to harvest rather than to log tropical forests.

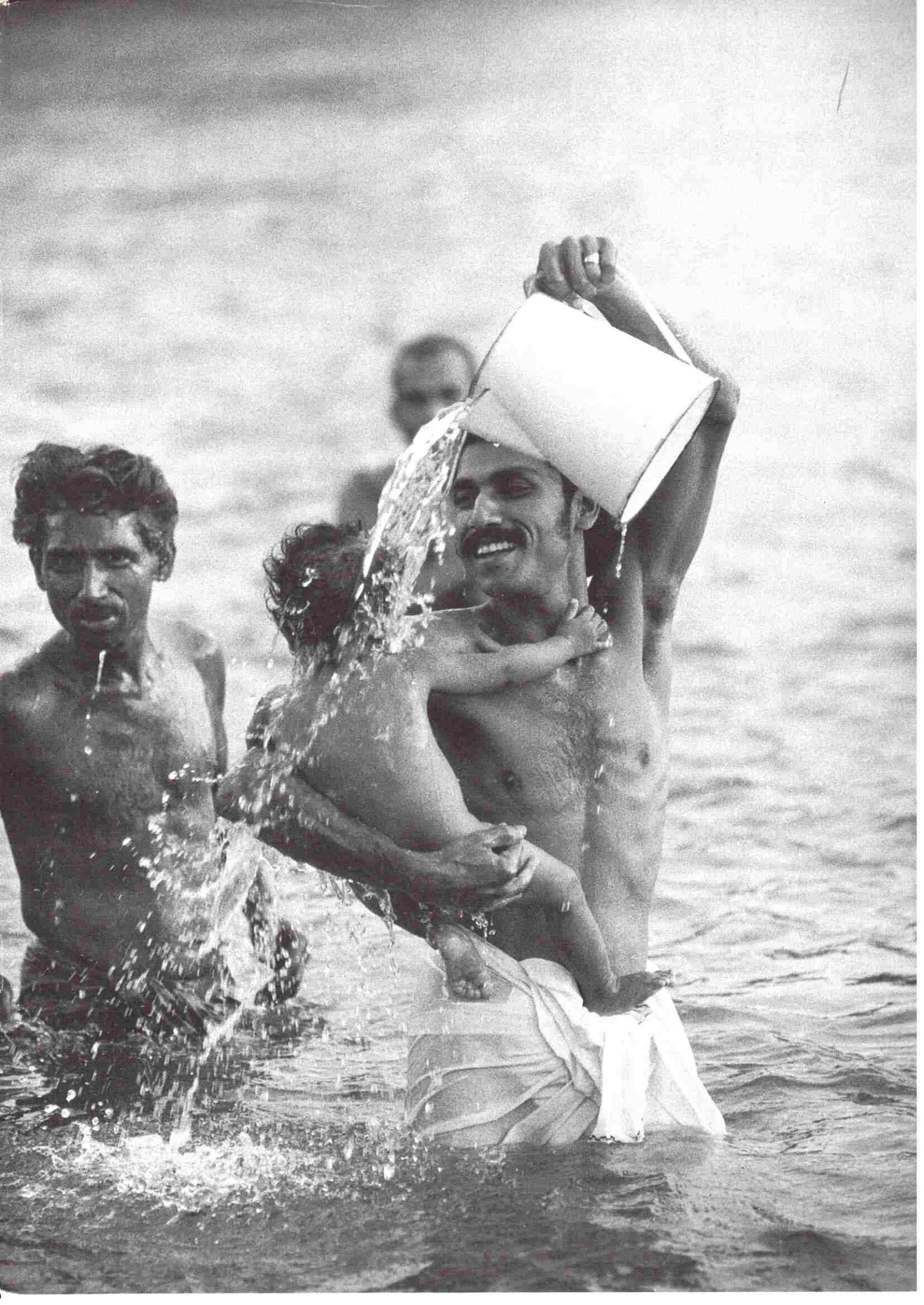
The forceful argument is that the immense mineral, oil and gas, hydro-electric, and biodiversity potential of the Amazon is compatible with sustainable development. What is needed are macro "economic-ecological zoning" and "micro-ecological actions" at the local level allowing a proper role for private enterprise, malaria prevention and maternal-infant care to improve the human environment, and marketing of agro-forestry products. "The line of action to reduce pressure on the forests requires a combination of stable tenure and farming techniques for Amazonian conditions that will make agriculture, combined with agroforestry and animal husbandry, a sustainable activity."

The author argues that the obstacles to sustainable development in Amazonia are formidable but not insurmountable. "The greatest single challenge facing Amazonian agricultural research and extension agents is to help small farmers develop technologies for the humid tropics that will make them stable landholders." These changes in human behaviour are occurring.

*Aaron Segal*

Dr Segal is Professor of Political Science at the University of El Paso, Texas.

LUKE GOLOBITSH



# People & the Planet

**"The information, experiences and insights found in *People & the Planet* are very helpful to us . . . "**

*Anne Vincent, Policy Development Co-ordinator*
*African National Congress, Women's League*

Since its launch at the Earth Summit in Rio, in June 1992, *People & the Planet* has filled a unique niche in the magazine publishing field. Believing that a sustainable future can only be achieved by treating the issues of development, environment and population in an integrated way, it is exploring this unknown territory issue by issue.

With a partnership of agencies, working in all these fields, and a network of correspondents and expert contributors, it is seeking to trace a path towards a healthy world for all.

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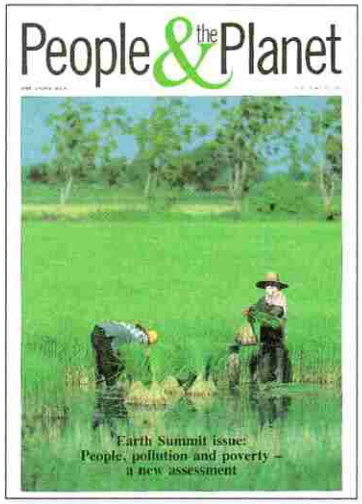


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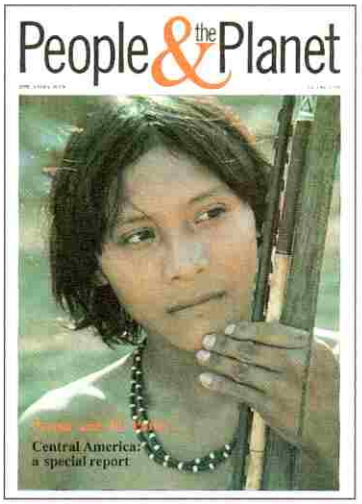


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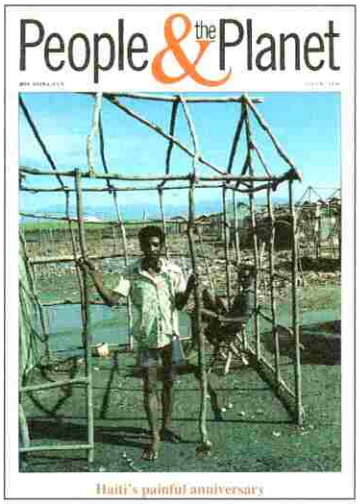


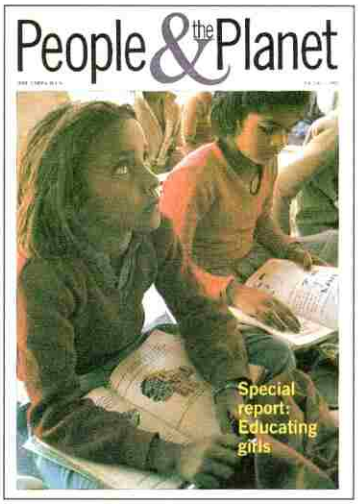


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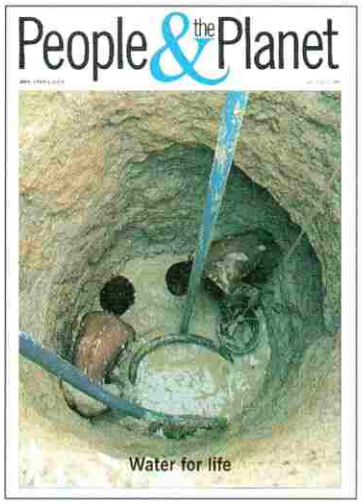


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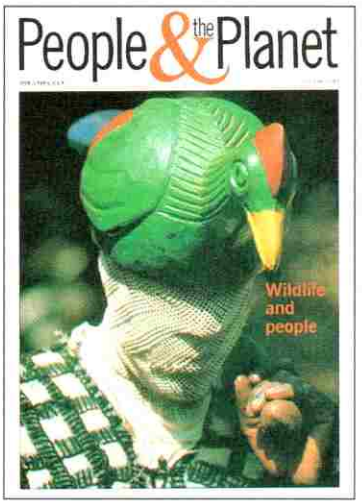


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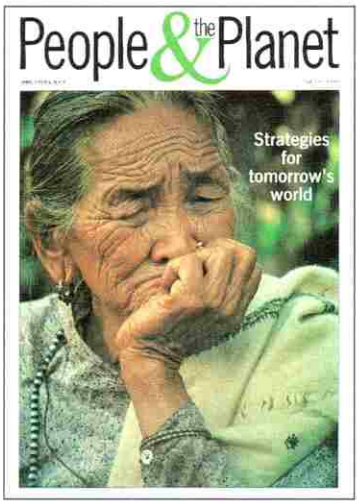


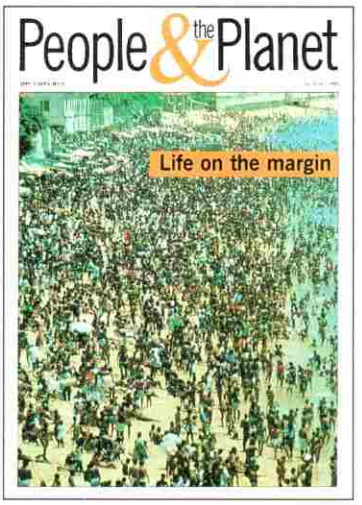


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